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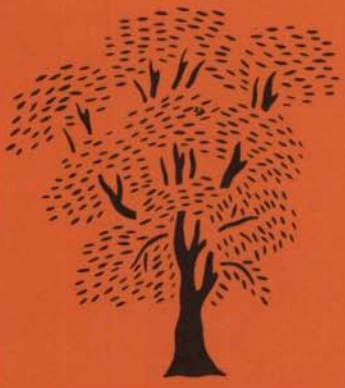

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Editor's Note

We regret that because of a failure in communication some changes were made without Norman Podhoretz's approval in his contribution to the anniversary issue (October 1984). Mr. Podhoretz's piece was cast in the form of a personal letter to William Phillips, and he feels that the title it was given ("The Future of America"), and the elimination of the use of the personal pronouns, altered the tone of his remarks. Our apologies.

In the same issue, Dmitri Nabokov should have been credited as the translator of "The Grand-dad" by Vladimir Nabokov.

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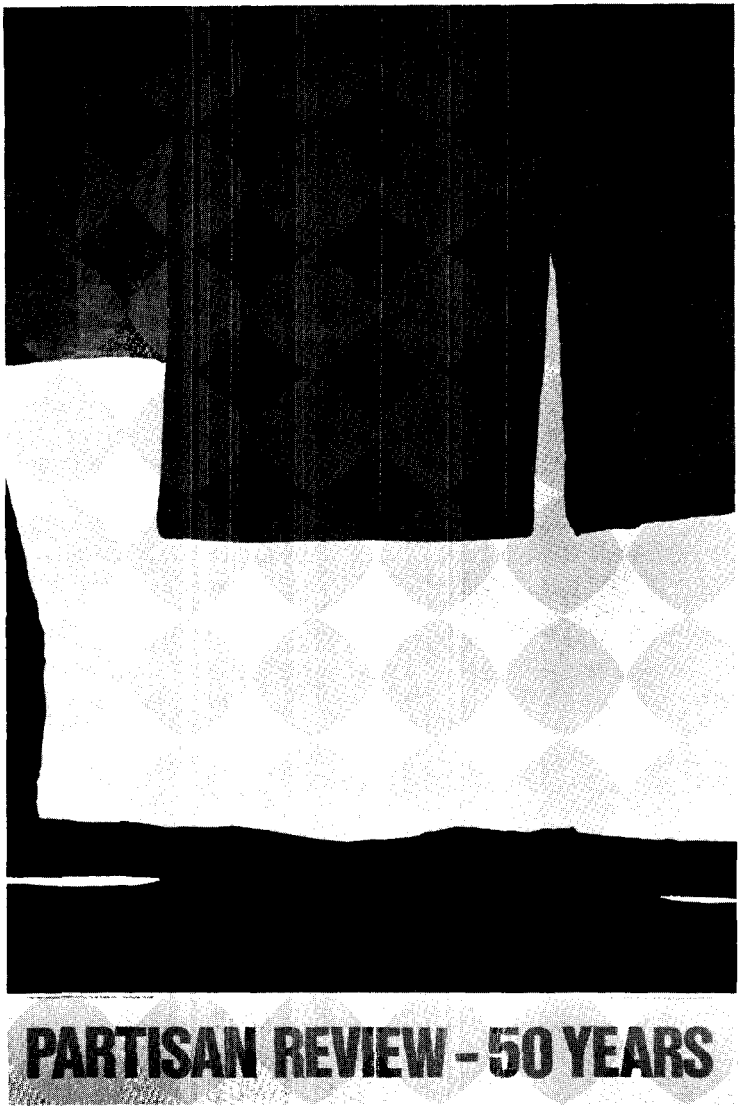
Helen Frankenthaler has generously contributed a commemorative poster to celebrate our fiftieth anniversary.



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FERNANDO ARRABAL is the well-known Spanish author and playwright. His latest novel, *The Castle Struck by Lightning*, will be brought out by Viking-Penguin this fall. . . . *The Image and Other Stories*, **ISAAC BASHEVIS SINGER**'s new collection, will be published this spring by Farrar, Straus & Giroux. . . . **LIONEL ABEL**'s memoir, *The Intellectual Follies*, has been recently issued by W. W. Norton. . . . Professor of Chinese literature at the University of Chicago, **LEO LEE** writes frequently on contemporary Chinese literature and culture. . . . **CHARLES TOMLINSON**'s latest volume is *Notes from New York and Other Poems*, recently published by Oxford University Press. . . . **MARY OLIVER** received the 1984 Pulitzer Prize for her book of poems, *American Primitive* (Little, Brown & Co.). . . . **EUGENIO MONTALE**, 1896–1981, was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1975. . . . **WILLIAM ARROWSMITH**'s complete translation of Montale's *La Bufera e Altro* (*The Storm and Other Things*) is forthcoming from W. W. Norton. . . . **DAVID WEISS**, who teaches at Hobart and William Smith Colleges, has completed a chapbook of poems, *The Pail of Steam*, to be published by State Street Press. . . . **ANDREW HARVEY**'s latest work is *A Journey in Ladakh*, from Houghton Mifflin. . . . Author of the poetic translation, *Pindar's Victory Songs* (Johns Hopkins University Press), **FRANK J. NISETICH** is an associate professor of classics at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. . . . **MICHAEL GOODMAN** lives in Boston and works for the Cambridge consulting firm of Arthur D. Little. . . . **DAVID ST. JOHN** is now Fellow in Literature at the American Academy in Rome. His new volume of poetry, *No Heaven*, will be put out this spring by Houghton Mifflin. . . . *The Mural of Wakeful Sleep* by **LAURENCE LIEBERMAN**, the second in a trilogy of poems about the Caribbean, will be published by Macmillan. . . . Art historian, curator, and critic, **BARBARA ROSE** is the author of *American Art Since 1900* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston). . . . **FRED MISURELLA** is working on a series of articles about Milan Kundera and other Central European writers now living in Paris. . . . **MARK SHECHNER**'s essay on Wilhelm Reich is part of a forthcoming book on Jewish intellectual life in America after the war. . . . **MILLICENT BELL** is a professor of English at Boston University and the author of *Edith Wharton and Henry James* (George Braziller) and other works of criticism and biography. . . . **PAUL HOLLANDER**, author of *The Many Faces of Socialism* (Transaction Books), is a fellow at the Russian Research Center of Harvard University and a professor of sociology at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. . . . **BERNARD SEMMEL**, whose most recent book is *John Stuart Mill and the Pursuit of Virtue* (Yale University Press), is a professor of history at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. . . . **EDITH KURZWEIL** is currently writing a book comparing psychoanalysis in America, Austria, France, and Germany, tentatively titled, *Four Faces of Freud*. . . . **EUGENE GOODHEART**, Edytha Macy Gross Professor of Humanities at Brandeis University, is the author of *The Skeptic Disposition in Contemporary Criticism*, just issued by Princeton University Press. . . . An associate professor of English at Boston University and author of *Marianne Moore: Imaginary Possessions* (Harvard University Press), **BONNIE COSTELLO** is completing a book about Elizabeth Bishop. . . . **ANTHONY GIDDENS** is Reader in Sociology at the University of Cambridge, England. His latest book is *The Constitution of Society* (University of California Press).

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Fernando Arrabal

LETTER TO CASTRO

First Day of 1984
and the last of the first quarter century of the Castro Government

Señor Don Fidel Castro Ruz

Cuba

Carísimo Señor:

With the same mad hope and the same fear with which I once wrote to General Franco,

I write to you today, Caudillo.

Listen to this weak voice trembling as it comes to you.

Don't hide your heart behind your shield or your reason behind the unreasonableness of your cause.

Acknowledge my message in the midst of your courtiers' loud clamorings.

It is amazing to see the servility that sticks to your chariot.

From dawn to dusk dressed up like a soldier,

your appearance says everything, gets everything
for the uniform does make the commander.

You live in violence, never satisfied,
not even when guerrilla wars turn into big wars.

As if a centripetal fury were whirling you around.

A hoarse one-eyed horse who's lost touch with tenderness, drowned in a cataract turned sour.

You promise
death
to the "intellectual rats,"
you promise
"the entire American continent"
will burn because your own life is being consumed.

Editor's Note: This article was written on the occasion of the Cuban Revolution's twentieth anniversary and first appeared in 1983 in France as *Lettrè á Fidel Castro: An "1984,"* published by Christian Bourgois Éditeur. It is translated from the Spanish by Edith Grossman.

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Do you suffer so much?
Is your life so sad that you conceive only of murder and arson?
What has become of that colt who moved us when he announced the dawn?
What happened to the man who whispered before he came to power:
"You get fond of people and imagine that you've always loved them."?
Yesterday,
a splendid Cuban standing on your own feet
without a crown,
or baubles, or a beard, you wrote:
"Feelings are as indestructible as the purest diamond,"
but years later,
sitting on your throne,
you tortured the poet Heberto Padilla until he was forced to recite the most abject confession made in Spanish since the Inquisition.
The poet knew the weight of your fists
and the refinement of your tortures.
Heberto Padilla was
bleeding,
corralled,
and handcuffed
when you came to read him the document in his cell.
Cowardice is also learned in the halls of Totalitarian Power.
How the musty courtrooms grow enraged!
Orwell's novel, *1984*, swells into prophecy when,
among a thousand mirror images,
the "Hate Your Enemy" displays,
like "Hate Week" in the book,
spring up everywhere in today's Cuba,
constantly,
by your order.
"Infinite hatred of the enemy is the seed of socialism," proclaims your Minister of Education, José Ramón Fernández.
The Island, choked by thorny weeds, whispers to itself of your withered reason.
Cuba has adopted the language of Newspeak. Orwell imagines the Ministry of Plenty as MINIPLEN, the Ministry of Peace as MINIPAX, and the Ministry of Truth as MINITRUE,
just as on the Island today the Ministry of Public Health is called

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MINISAP, the Ministry of the Interior is called MININTER, and the Ministry of the Armed Forces is called MINIFAR.

Grotesqueries and distortions that disclose infinitely more than they imprudently reveal.

I write to you with love, but with firmness,

I regard you with pity, but with respect;

for every human being deserves to have his mind convinced even if his madness is not overcome.

Your age deserves respect, since you have reached sixty, and you have already received the title of

"Hero of the Soviet Union"

and have accomplished the not inconsiderable feat of still being the mythic incarnation of

"Rebellious Youth"

in Official Cuba.

The title that would be closer to the truth, closer to your actions and your appearance, is one you could have easily given yourself with all modesty:

BIG BROTHER.

The faithful Cuban cadres would fervently stand at attention before this name, as they do today before

LEADER MAXIMUS,

and they would still do it

even more deferentially

if they knew that the title was only a free translation into Spanish of the name

of the tyrant in *1984*.

In today's Cuba, if adulation does not go beyond absurdity and abasement, it might look like mockery, or at least disrespect.

Spider's nightmare on an island in mourning!

When you were a freewheeling and upright adolescent, you dreamed of ending privilege and prerogative, but today, planted at the head of Cuba, titles, chocolate medals, offices and dignities that would have been the envy of the Radiant Sun of the Pampa or Emperor Bukassa of the Republic of Central Africa, are planted on your chest like onions, stuck on your biography like bandaids:

—Cuban Champion of Deep Sea Fishing,

—Legendary Basketball Player,

—First Deck Gunner in the Universe; with a single shot from a cannon you sank the "Houston,"

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—Winner of the Hemingway Trophy,

—Unique and Exclusive Wearer of the Military Decoration Designed Especially for You,

—Doctor Honoris Causa of Scientific Marxism,

Etc.

"Big Brother," confirms Orwell, "is infallible and all powerful. Every success, every achievement, every victory, every scientific discovery, all knowledge, all wisdom, all happiness, all virtue are held to issue directly from his leadership and inspiration."

What good does it do you to be "Supervisor-of-the -Ministry-of-the-Interior-with-authority-above-that-of-the-Minister-of-the-Bureau," when you already hold the highest offices:

—President of the Republic

—Prime Minister

—First Secretary of the Cuban Communist Party

—President of the Council of State

—Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces

—President of the Council of Ministers

Etc.

Amazing parapets of paraphernalia paved by your party parasites to paralyze you in your paranoia; you present them to yourself and pay for them with the patrimony of the country (just for the sake of appearances).

Pathetic peasant!

Hidden in your hideout you dream about your funeral, you hear the universal condemnation of your works, it is so near you can hear the chatter of your officious lackeys but you can't identify their voices.

Which one will be the Kruschev who denounces your crimes?

Will it be Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, your minister and also minister under the Dictator Batista?

Will anti-Castroism
reach the red heights of the anti-Stalinism of Kruschev, or the yellow heights of the anti-Maoism in today's Peking?

How many millions of the dead will pack you away beneath your tombstone when your mouth is sealed forever?

When you took power there were six million Cubans in Cuba: almost two million chose liberty.

"Fidel, the island is 'your' house."

Just yours. Because if your navy would raise the blockade to

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which you subject your own people, the Pearl of the Antilles would turn into the Island of Robinson Crusoe.

What an Easter Sunday!

But how hard it would be for you to find your good Friday!

Heaven and hope full of holes, and time rots in the clocks.

Today only fools still dare to underplay Communist "excesses" in Cuba so they can better appreciate its "accomplishments."

They make an undeserved distinction between what is acceptable for Cuba but unacceptable for themselves, and they insult the Cuban people by not acknowledging their courage, or their culture, or their right to the freedom which *they* still enjoy.

This argument,

less racist than ignorant,

was astounding when heard in the mouth of a Swede who played the part of a dumb Swede when he talked about the Island.

In 1959, Cuba compared to Sweden in music, novels, poetry, chess, railroads, television sets, etc.

If, for absurd argument's sake, Cubans should have suffered despotism, torture and gags from that year on, then Swedes would have deserved tyranny, shackles and dungeons.

Why wouldn't the steps taken by Sweden have served just as well for Cuba, where the rhumba was invented?

If something burns or someone sobs, all that remains are blackened ruins and tears.

Today the only glory lies in the glosses written to glorify you in your lair. For foreign propagandists, paradise has turned into purgatory and a magnificent future into a mirage.

But in their zeal they would like to turn widespread fear into a cult of "culture" and "health."

Cuba, they assure us, has taken

a giant step forward

in Education and Social Welfare.

In these two areas, it seems to me, her steps are not giant—they are not even gnomish,

they are the steps of a crab

which, as everybody knows, is an animal that walks backwards.

EDUCATION: STEADY!

It is quite amazing to remember how you promised, before you took power,

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to turn barracks into schools,

yet today you have militarized the university and placed all educational institutions under Castroite military control.

Obscene guards whose pincers strip Cuban adolescents of their desires.

The Minister of Education in Cuba holds his office with as much justice as the Minister of Justice holds his.

In Pinar del Río he recently declared: "A good teacher is a militiaman with a solid socialist morality."

In *1984* the Ministry of Love controls repression and proclaims that "Ignorance is Strength"; your devoted followers have translated the slogan into Cuban in this way:

"It is better to have an illiterate Communist for a teacher than a competent non-Communist."

Poor Cuba!

The classic writers used to say that brains were better than books, but today, in Cuba, muscle is better than meditation. If students want to hit the books they have to put their books away and work like slaves.

Cuban students have to pay for their studies with unpaid labor in work camps.

It is difficult to believe that the young—children and teenagers—have to spend an important part of their time as students doing the kind of farm labor that is illegal for minors under eighteeen years of age in France or Spain.

You have a license to give lessons to the whole world, but the only advice you accept is

approbation.

You permit what no other American tyrant has dared to allow.

If a fascist dictator from Patafascilandia sent out ten-year-old children to fertilize the fields, the world would rise up in righteous and reasonable indignation.

Cuban children and teenagers who don't obey your commands are labelled "ideological diversionists"
and sent to concentration camps.

Look at the tasks you force these sad little Hercules to perform:

All citrus fruit in Isla de Pinos, Valle de Picaduras and Sierra de Cubitas is picked by junior high school and high school students.

The planting and cleaning of sugar cane is the responsibility of young students.

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Three quarters of the tobacco harvesters in Pinar del Río and Villas are children and teenagers.

Etc.

To please you, Felipe Pérez Roque, President of the National Federation of Middle School Students, announced:

"We will increase our farm labor, the harvesting of citrus fruits and the gathering of raw materials by young people, so that
the profits will cover the costs of education
and the balance can be used by our soldiers."

Another of your subordinates at the same "Assembly for Communist Education," was more precise:

"The Pioneers" (children between the ages of six and twelve) "will harvest 84 million kilograms of citrus fruits for export."

Yes, Poor Cuba!

Cuba is an island prison that one sometimes leaves to go to a smaller prison called concentration camp.

In this vile place children, high school students, college students and their parents, without a voice and without a vote, have no power to make decisions.

The Party, pregnant with authority, gives birth to its inexorable decrees and chooses the school, the curriculum and the career "for the good of 'Revolution'"—
AMGR

Teenagers, lying in the discipline-colored ruins, sleep with the angel of dreams and dream they are escaping to a silent country where poppies are not red.

Under scrutiny from the moment they take their first steps, young Cubans move from the UPC (Union of Cuban Pioneers) to the FEEM (the Federation of Middle School Students) and finally, if they belong to the minority that reaches higher education, to the FEU (Federation of University Students) as if they were walking through different compartments in the same cage.

Your guardians watch, night and day, so that they do not cut the umbilical cord that attaches them to Mama "Revolution."

You, who pretend to be the incarnation of rebellion, demand that the exemplary hero of a Pioneer's first years be a Soviet boy, keen-eyed and quick tongued, who betrayed his father and his grandmother. Just as keen and just as quick,

"Revolution"
shot them.

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For a spirited "revolutionary" every word has its telling effects.

Cuban children's hands may be washed, but special attention is paid to their brains; in their primers "F" is for Fidel, "M" is for Marx, "B" is for Brezhnev. The same alphabet soup is served to adolescents, but if they want to finish their studies they will not only have to pass the course in Marxism-Leninism, they will also have to worship ideology, almost as if it were the cult to your personality.

The libraries on the Island, trampled by Attila's horse, have amputated every heterodoxy . . . Mao Tse Tung's, for example. But the sacrilegious books are carried inside profane ones, and they are read secretly, on horseback, forgetting the red scourge that burns everything to ashes.

You have hung a slogan from *1984* in every school:

"Inside 'the' Revolution everything, outside 'the' Revolution nothing."

Even the youngest children translate it correctly: "For the rich —leaders, athletes, the military, the police—everything; for the poor, what's left over."

And in fact, the children of "Revolution's" privileged few attend special luxurious schools to which they are driven in government cars.

You have built a modern school in the Municipality of Moa for the offspring of the Soviet colonists.

More than seventy-eight percent of the population was illiterate on Independence Day, 1898, and there was over twenty-one percent illiteracy when you came to power twenty-five years ago. The Cuban people hoped to wipe out this stain, and the most pessimistic estimated that it would be eradicated by the 1970s; the advent of Communism has interfered with this victory.

Today the number of university students per one thousand inhabitants is half of what it was when you took over, and the Education budget has decreased by the same proportion.

The exiles stand out because of their limited vocabularies; university students usually have to repeat their studies when they do manage to escape, since they are at a level only slightly higher than that of an ordinary high school graduate.

Generations of Cubans trapped between denunciation and catechism, adulation and tedium.

Stepmother "Revolution" treats the young as if they were spoiled babies in the hope that as adults they will regress to submissive infancy.

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SOCIALIST MEDICINE AND SUICIDE

In today's Cuba there is no child who is not brutalized in a camp, no statistic that is not overcome in a pamphlet.

The sick, rather than fighting their own disease, are condemned to cure the State's.

With the money they pay for drugs, Cubans not only buy medicine but also underwrite a bankrupt State, and are thereby doubly deserving of the name "patient."

You have devised an extraordinary plan to pay the costs of the Ministry of Public Health.

As you know, a sick man has to work two or three days to pay for a small bottle of vitamin pills.

If the same sick man were lucky enough to live four hundred kilometers from Havana, in Miami, with only an hour of his labor he could buy the same pills . . . but with better packaging, larger doses, and three supplementary vitamins.

Cuba, to the best of my knowledge, has the highest prices for medicines in the world.

Poor Cubans—ninety-five percent of the population—pay
with their blood
or the blood of their families
for admission to a hospital.

And as you well know, this isn't poetic license, it is a reality made up of bloodstones and leukocytes.

And what do you do with the blood of your people?

You sell it to the highest bidder.

How I wish these horrors had never happened. How I would rejoice if someone could show me that the information I have received from so many sources is false!

It is no triumph for a man to contemplate the misfortune of another.

Don't you grow tired of devising slavetrader's schemes day and night?

Don't you weary of always hanging hate in the doorways, of filling walls with cracks, eyes with tears and hearts with hatred?

Don't you grow tired of being a tyrant?

"The world is more backward today than it was fifty years ago," writes Orwell in *1984*, referring to the Cuba that you have impoverished.

In hospitals in Cuba the workers are devoured by mosquitoes, cockroaches, flies and heat, and from their hospital cots, their beds

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of scratching, sweating, suffering, they can see the stopped-up toilets and the dirty water that contaminates everything.

In the Castellanos Ward of the National Psychiatric Hospital of Havana, the floors are built on a slant; patients move their bowels and when they are finished, the excrement is washed toward the hall with buckets of water.

But you have made sure that those in charge enjoy Western air-conditioned conditions when they fall ill.

The Frank Pais Hospital offers a most hospitable ward, since it hospitalizes leaders, athletes and foreigners.

Where is that kid Fidel from the University of Havana who was going to divide up everything?

One out of four people who die in Cuba kill themselves, if we are to believe the statistics of the living and of the lively villains who govern them.

On the Island even the rational do violence to themselves, thereby ending the violence all around them.

I read the 1980 annual report of MINISAP with the same right that the Cuban people have to consult it,

that is, with no right,

and only through an oversight.

It is a confidential report that is supposed to be seen only by your confidants and confidels, but it came into my hands from the hands of an exile.

In the chapter "Causes of death between 14 and 49 years of age," we learn that the number of persons taking their own lives is increasing steadily on the Island—from 15.33 percent of the total number of deaths in 1968 to 22.88 percent in 1980—perhaps because it is the only thing that can be done freely in Cuba.

Shreds of memory eat away at life with the promise of hope.

It is a record of slaughter that reveals Cuba's misfortunes by demonstrating the despair of its unfortunate people.

But there are the unlucky and there are those who happen to have bad luck, and there is as much difference between them as there is between those who commit suicide and those who have "suicide" committed on them.

The poor in Cuba commit suicide without help from anyone, but those of your class may be helped along to their deaths by suicide.

The humble pass on to a better life by taking their own, but perhaps the powerful have theirs taken away by "suiciding" them. In

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the time of Stalin, his enemies died after confessing; yours, when they awake, find themselves suicided, without confession, and this awakens all kinds of suspicions:

—Allende's daughter, who had taken refuge in Havana, found no refuge from her disillusionment, and on the verge of choosing liberty—committed "suicide."

—Nilsa Espín, a high-placed leader of M-26 and sister of Vilma ("Deborah"): the official legend says that she committed suicide with a sudden blast from a machine gun . . .

. . . in the office of your brother Raúl!

A "suicide" in which she not only showed her talents as a contortionist, able to shoot herself with such a weapon, but also her ability as Wonder Woman, able to get past the multitude of guards who protect the Minister of the Armed Forces without any of them noticing that she was armed with a machine gun.

-Captain Feliz Peña committed "suicide" when he decided to defend the accused pilots.

-Commander Eduardo Suñol committed suicide without further official details, as did Commander Alberto Mora, Police Captain Arturo Martínez Escobar, and Onelio Pino, Commander of your legendary yacht, "Gramma."

-Captain Rivera, connected to Raúl Castro's political family through two other members, shot himself on a military base when he tried to break his family ties.

-Oswaldo Dorticos, Minister of Justice, did not die of laughter as he contemplated his title but rather, according to your reports, "he committed suicide" in the "third week" of the month of June 1983, "in despair because of the death of his wife and because of back trouble." A praiseworthy despair, which he knew how to face by living with a woman comrade since 1967, when he and his wife separated. On May 1st, only weeks before his death and in spite of the pain he was suffering, he walked the five kilometer "March of the Fighting People." I am looking now at a photograph from *Bohemia* dated May 6th in which he is undaunted, upright, martial, walking next to Carlos Rafael Rodríguez and toward his unsuspected "suicide."

-Haydée Santamaría, Director of the Casa de las Americas and member of the Central Committee, committed "suicide" in 1980 . . . on the 26th of July! And with that you succeeded in placing a mourning wreath on the day that symbolizes rebellion for you,

and in adding even more villainy to the date.

During the time of Batista, Haydée Santamaría, a clairvoyant

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or a prophet, said to Dr. Torriente—and to herself without realizing it—"Doctor, you must commit suicide . . . *suicide is also a political weapon.*"

THE EXQUISITE LIFE OF A LEADER

The deluded poor and the decorated rich live the reverse of your proletarian speeches.

You, who galvanized us with your egalitarianism, today regale your henchmen with such lavishness that in Cuba the underdogs were never so low and the overdogs never so high and mighty.

But none so high as you.

Orwell writes: "The general poverty stresses the importance of the privileges and distinctions that separate one group from another."

You enjoy few sensations as exquisite as having yourself elected, unanimously,

to the office of President of the Council of State by a Council of State whose members, each and every one of them, you appointed as easily as you could annihilate them.

It is a refined drug that holds no danger of abuse or addiction.

How absurd is your hope that you can give yourself everything!

What madness to satisfy every whim!

Your ostentation is so great, your offices so numerous, your privileges so many, but with so much display only your debilities shine through.

Perfumed with medals, your beard half-opened with a spider's gluttony, your arrogance dresses for a funeral with no crepe or comfort.

-You have at your disposal twenty-five houses and estates known as "Fidel's residences."

Like a god, you've changed the date of Carnival just because you wanted to: it's no longer the beginning of Lent, it's the middle of summer.

-Your birthdays are an "obligatorily voluntary" celebration in every barracks, factory, shop, school, university. In every corner of the Island they sing you the proletarian version of Happy Birthday.

-You've added the decadent luxuries of a millionaire from the 1930s to your sumptuous Soviet limousine.

With a single kick of your boot you've suppressed the celebration of Christmas Eve and Christmas, and with one stroke of the pen

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you've moved the children's holiday Twelfth Night from January to July.
-Henri, formerly of El Sol tailors, is considered by you and your henchmen to be the finest tailor on the Island; he has been detained in Cuba so that he can cut and sew the best English gabardine for your armchair guerrilla olive green uniforms.
-You spend what you like without having to account for the money to any King except yourself.
-You own several private beaches; one of them, a former club for aristocrats, is reserved for your personal use. Armed police patrol it so that no curiosity seeker from the masses can disturb its charm by intruding on your oasis. Subservient servants, like those from colonial times, minister to your needs. The oriental luxury of that beach can be testified to by various European ministers who have been your guests there. Etc.

An insatiable hunger for everything that nothing can satisfy, your ingots are made of mud and your sky is made of medals.

To celebrate your birthday, the members of the Central Committee of the (one and only) Communist Party of Cuba, in joyful gratitude to the man who appointed them to that little trifle, presented you with what they called

"a small gift."

Like wise and prudent servants, they knew how to denigrate what was nothing less than the product of the first action they had initiated in the Assembly without your permission.

Because you are, Prince of Cuba, the primum mobile, and they, participants without principles, are your principal servants.

The gift was not so much "small" in size as it was large in reverence for you; it was

a yacht,

the most luxurious yacht ever anchored in a Cuban port, and bigger than

Onassis's.

But then protocol demanded it: you are the owner of an island infinitely larger than the one in the Aegean owned by the Greek millionaire.

The small gift was built on a grand scale in the Regla shipyards that are controlled by the Ministry of Construction. Ramiro Valdés Menéndez directed the team of naval engineers with so much skill that he was subsequently reinstated as Minister of the Interior.

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For a great deal is needed to crown a leader when he is maximus!

It was an enormous task to create such an unusual treasure; the specialists didn't allow class prejudices to get in the way: otherwise it would have had no legs, no eyes, no motor, and no class.

It was necessary, in so difficult a situation, to show good judgment; they avoided the errors of their red comrades and used the tools of the reviled whites:

the steel came from Sweden
the motors from Detroit—thanks to a diabolical Dutch ruse—
the propellers from England
the marbles from Italy
the aluminum from Ottawa
the pianos from Tokyo
the designs from Miami
the porcelain from London
the perfumes from Milan
the axles from Liverpool
the electronic equipment from Japan

(In the dry dock of your arrogance, among ashes and rags, the cows low without udders and the crows caw without wings.)

The TUXPAN is a yacht with three bridges surrounded by bulletproof glass, a projection room, staterooms with marble baths and fittings for deep sea fishing, for it would be foolish for you to sail discontentedly when you steer the ship of state with such a firm hand, your lackeys said to themselves.

When you are not using your pharoah's barque, it is berthed in the Navy Arsenal, under the care of "personnel selected by State Security," so that the common people cannot touch the treasure or tarnish with tainted breath its porcelain or marble.

Perhaps one day you'll come down and prove to them with photographs or film that your yacht ought to be in pictures!

Knowing that you sail the seas in such luxury does not help or hearten the Cubans, it disheartens and sickens them, because for Cubans, according to Niedergand in *Le Monde*,

"transportation is a real calamity."

Thanks to Francis Pisani, also of *Le Monde*, we know that

"it is frequent to wait two and even three hours for a bus that never comes"; the buses, when they do arrive, are packed with passengers; they don't stop at the busstops for fear they'll be assaulted . . . or if they do stop, you have to force your way on."

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A DREAM? A NIGHTMARE? NO. THERE IS NO REASON TO SLANDER NIGHTMARES

(*Tchoukovskaia*)

You don't need much to dislocate a mind that is more generous than grasping, but then how much sickness of soul settles in. Those who suffer through the process imagine they are doing doublethink when they are really double-entry hemiplegiacs.

There are so many in Latin America who have been broken by this mutilation, it's as if you had dropped a neutron bomb on the heads of the weakest intellectuals.

Orthodoxy is the most powerful incantation for obtaining obedience. Since the orthodox is no longer a person but only a shell, how easy for you to play on the shards with the helmet of submission.

It really is true that you propagate the lie that the "CIA" wants to destroy Latin America. But if the fairy tale were turned into truth, you would be the model for its agents. You have already caused so much harm among the flabbiest minds on the continent with your incontinent mania for mentally manacling them, that if your machinations should triumph, Latin America, defenseless and "brainwashed," would be ready for colonization by the first colonialism that came along. Like Cuba's.

There were Spanish kings who aspired to greatness by surrounding themselves with dwarves, imbeciles and cripples. And History did not judge them too harshly when it called their time the Decadence.

You do not aspire to Decadence but to Prehistory. You demand of your loyal followers the suicide of their own intelligence so that they can enter the Prehistory of the Soul.

And in the end, after you have achieved this end, all of them will be able to write, like Orwell's hero, that

"two plus two equals five"

or, what comes to the same thing,

"Cuba is the first free country in America."

Leave Cuba in peace!

Wouldn't you, and the Cubans, be happier if you could all finally awaken from the nightmare? And may nightmares pardon me!

Sincerely,

Fernando Arrabal
Paris

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FICTION

Isaac Bashevis Singer

LOSHIKL

In the jail cell dusk had fallen. Everyone's face was hidden in shadows. It was too dark for card playing. The guard wouldn't be bringing in the kerosene lamp for yet another hour. It was brought in late, it was allowed to burn for only half an hour and then taken out. Three prisoners, Berele Zwaniak, Yankel Dezma, and Shmuel Kluska were sitting around, talking.

Berele Zwaniak said: "They know, they know, but they play dumb. Not all husbands are alike. One is ready to stab you if you so much as give his wife a smile or a wink. But some other sucker takes you in as a boarder and leaves you with his wife all day long and sometimes all night to boot. I knew such a couple. His name was Getzel and his wife's name was Malka. He rented an alcove in his apartment to a good pal of mine, a safecracker, Hershel Shmirer, a giant of a man. Getzel himself, a small fellow, had a little workshop two blocks away where he made paper bags. All day long he sat at his workbench and glued together the paper bags. In the evening, instead of coming home, he would grab a bite in the corner café and take off with his chums to play cards. He wouldn't get home until two o'clock in the morning and sometimes he played 'til daybreak. How much could you possibly win at cards? Monday he would walk away with a ruble, Tuesday he would lose it back. But it's a kind of obsession. Something gets in your head and sticks there like a nail. Look at us. Stealing will never make you rich. But you get used to it and you think that without it you couldn't survive. It draws you like a magnet. The other day I swore to my mother by all that's holy that I would go back to shoe-making. She took a Bible out of her dresser and made me swear on it. But as soon as I walked out on the square I forgot everything I promised her. A friend of mine came along and

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Editor's Note: This story is translated from the Yiddish by Rina Borrow. It will appear in *The Image and Other Stories* by Isaac Bashevis Singer, to be published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux this spring.

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he had a deal for me. He gave me no time to think it over. We pulled it off, slick as butter. Hard cash, not merchandise that needs to be sold through a fence on Wolowa Street. Then we dropped into Lazar's Tavern and hit the bottle. But why do I tell you all this? Once you become addicted you see nothing else. At two o'clock in the morning, when Getzel, the husband, finally dragged himself home dead tired from a whole day's work and a half a night's gambling, he fell into bed more dead than alive. You want to tell me that he didn't know? Card playing just came first with him."

"What would have happened if Hershel Shmirer had made her pregnant?" Shmuel Kluska asked.

"The sky wouldn't have fallen," Berel Zwaniak answered.

"What happened to them?" Yankel Dezma asked.

"It just so happened that Hershel Shmirer was caught red-handed stealing and they threw him in jail. Malka used to bring him packages to the cage."

In love with the safe safecracker, huh?" Shmuel Kluska asked.

"A female, if you keep her happy, she latches on to you," Berele Zwaniak said.

There was in the same cell another prisoner, Itche the Blind or Itche the Accurate. He was called Itche the Blind because he had only one eye; the other one had been gouged out many years back. The name Accurate was given to him because of his proper bearing. Itche the Blind didn't go out on the street himself any more. He taught young punks the trade and got a percentage of every take. He was also part owner of a bordello. For almost fifteen years Itche the Blind had stayed on the loose. But he was arrested because of a run-in with a police commissar, and got entangled in a trial. He was soon supposed to be free on bail. The guards in the jail held Itche in high esteem. He received from the outside packages of chocolate, cigarettes, even cans of sardines to which he treated everyone.

For Itche the Blind it would have been degrading to involve himself with the petty thieves who were his cellmates. He was now stretched out on a bunk and smoking one cigarette after another. But the conversation apparently had captured his interest. From time to time he mumbled to himself. Suddenly, he drew himself up to his full height, a huge man, wide-shouldered, with a shock of hair beginning to gray at the temples. He took a stride toward the others and asked: "May I say something too?"

For a while all three thieves were speechless. Berele Swaniak was the first to find his tongue.

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"Have a seat, Itche, you're like a rabbi to us."

Itche the Blind sat down.

"Have a smoke."

He offered each of the prisoners a cigarette. He took out a lighter and passed it around for them to light up. In a deep voice, he said, "A rabbi, huh? We in Warsaw had only one rabbi, Chazkele, may he intercede for us. His word was gold. A day didn't go by without his hitting on some scheme. He had a mind like a trap. The chief of police himself respected him. If Chazkele hadn't become what he was, he could have been a big shot in Petersburg. I was listening to what you were saying. Men, women, whores, not-whores. Each woman has her own ways of hooking a man. In my youth I had my share of loving, I can't complain. I slowed down when I realized that one good female can satisfy a man better than five dozen tramps who are only after a pair of stockings or a mug of beer. You all are still bagel snatchers, wet behind the ears, and what can you know? We have no Chazkele these days. No, and does anyone today remember Red Reitzele? That was what they called her. You've probably never heard of her. But there'll never be another Reitzele either. Reitzele was a smart cookie. She had a husband, a businessman, not a crook. His name was Antshel, a real estate broker. Those were the days when Warsaw was being built up with paved sidewalks, marketplaces, high buildings. The banks had a lot of money and extended credit. If you could show that you had five thousand rubles in cash, you could borrow an additional twenty or thirty thousand ruble on a mortgage. Our Jews began wheeling and dealing and the time was ripe for a lot of brokerage business.

"Overnight paupers became millionaires. Antshel knew how to open up doors, where and who to offer bribes. He was a shrewd bastard. But he wasn't any good with women. For Reitzele he was barely enough for a snack, not a full meal. The likes of him have to be helped along. He wasn't one to begrudge others, like a dog on a haystack who can't eat himself and won't let others near it. As to Reitzele she wasn't just a tease. When I met her I was eighteen and she a good thirty-six and maybe even a bit older. My parents had at first wanted to make of me a yeshiva student. But I didn't have a mind for the Gemara. When they saw that I would never turn out to be a scholar, they wanted me to become a tailor. However, in those days an apprentice had to spend three years in his master's house pouring out the slops and rocking the baby. It took a long time before he was allowed to sew on a button or make a buttonhole. When

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I found myself with my back up against the wall I left everything and ran off to Warsaw. I found my way to Chazkele and he was the leader of all the toughs in the city. As I told you: I'm from the provinces, not from Warsaw. The Warsaw wise guys used to needle us newcomers and call us yokels, or Litvack swine. In Warsaw if you were born on the other side of the city line, you're already a Lithuanian. Here comes the guard with his lamp, a fire in his guts!"

A guard brought in a kerosene lamp with a blackened globe. A reddish glow spread over everyone's face. When the guard saw Itche the Blind sitting with the other inmates he shook his head as if to say: This is beneath you.

Itche the Blind began to blink with his good eye. He spoke to the guard: "Stach, we don't need the lamp. It gives no light, only smoke."

"Mr. Itche, I'm not the boss here," the guard answered. "I'm just following orders."

"Here's a cigarette," Itche said, "but don't tell the other guards. They'll descend upon me like locusts."

"Thanks, I appreciate it."

"We're having a little chat to help us forget the stench from the can," Itche the Blind said as if trying to excuse himself.

"Yes, I understand. I have to follow the rules. How does the saying go? 'The small fry are hanged and the big ones are thanked.'"

* * *

The guard left and Itche the Blind continued, "Chazkele talked to me for about a half an hour. I told him that I couldn't find a decent night's lodging and he sent me to Red Reitzele. He said, 'Tell her Chazkele sent you and she'll open up doors for you. She likes young men, not old.' In my first half hour with him he gave me more wise counsel than the biggest lawyer could deliver in a year. If only I had listened to him I would still have both my eyes.

"Reitzele lived on Smocza Street, in a large apartment, three rooms and a kitchen, a new building with gas and a water closet. How I got the nerve first to approach Chazkele and then to go to Reitzele's is beyond me. I climbed up the painted steps, knocked, and a little woman with red hair like fire and green eyes like a cat's opened up. I stood at the threshold and she looked me up and down and inspected me as if I were to become her butler. Her teeth were sparse, but stronger than a dog's. Later on I saw her crack walnuts

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with those teeth. I told her that Chazkele had sent me, and a little smile lit up over her face. I looked at her hands and I felt a twinge of desire. Some men boast that they can tell a woman by her eyes, others claim that you can tell it all by the shape of the mouth. I can tell everything from hands. In the theater, when they want to flatter a woman, they rave about her long fingers. Nonsense! I like short fingers and short nails too. She stood before me in a knee-length apron, a short housedress and in slippers with pom poms. Her knees were pointed like those of a boy. I took one look at her and knew that she'd be mine.

"A half an hour later we were kissing. We fell upon each other with thirst. She pressed her mouth to mine as if she were trying to swallow it. In bed, she asked: 'What's your name?' I told her: 'Itche,' and she said: 'I don't like Itche. I'll call you Loshikl, because you are young and strong and you jump like a colt,' and that's how it was. It lasted eight years. I would say to her: 'Reitzele, I'm an old horse already, not a colt,' and she would reply: 'To me you'll always be a loshikl even if you're ninety.'

"That she was a good piece and that she loved men Antshel her husband knew quite well. For a couple of years he played dumb with me. Once when he ran into me at Lazar's tavern and we had a drink, he became talkative. He said to me: 'What do you call two husbands of the same wife?' I said to him: 'Brothers-in-law,' and he says: 'That's a silly name. We're more like brothers.' He went on: 'Loshikl, now that the cat is out of the bag, what do you say to our little wife? Have you ever had anything better?' And I said: 'Never had, never will have.' He said: 'She talks the same way about you. There's only one God and one Loshikl. Last year when they threw you in the slammer, she wanted to teach me your tricks, but I have no patience for such games. Jealous? How can I be jealous? She told me at the very beginning: "I'm not a rebbetzin, I like men." We are not her only ones. When she meets a man, right away she wants to try him out. If King Solomon, she says, could have a thousand wives, Reitzele can have a thousand husbands.'

"That evening, we became so close that we drank to brotherhood. Just the same when you're in love with someone you can't be above it all. A man is not a stone, no matter how much of a front he puts up. It burns you up when you know that your beloved is sleeping around with others. But if you have no choice, you grin and bear it, as they say. You can get used to anything. You can live and love with an ulcer in your gizzard. You can dance with a toothache.

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"Antshel was such a man. When Reitzele and I quarreled, he made peace between us. He wanted her to have her Loshikl.

"Yes, we all want pleasure, but what kind of pleasure is it to stretch out across someone's knee and be thrashed with a cat-o'-nine-tails 'til your butt swells? That's what some of my sweethearts wanted me to do to them. They would beg of me: 'Whip harder, Itchele, pull my hair! Bite my shoulder!' Reitzele had her own quirks. It started with her taking it upon herself to marry me off. I asked her: 'What good would it do you? And she said, 'When a colt grows older he needs his own mare.' I said to her: 'What do I need my own mare for? So that she should run around with every thug while I rot in jail?' And she said: 'I have a husband and I want you to have a wife. It'll be more fun that way. We'll go to the theater together or to the circus all four of us. We'll chat over a mug of beer.' I told her in no uncertain terms: 'It's not for me.' When she heard that, she set out to supply me with lovers. She would lie next to me on the sofa and say: 'Loshikl, I want to be your mother. I don't have any children, only one Loshikl, and I want to provide for his future. You are younger than me,' she says, 'and when I'm gone maybe you'll keep me in mind and say the Kaddish or light a candle for me.' I said: 'You're not about to croak yet, you'll outlive all of us,' and she said: 'No, Loshikl. My mother died young and my father passed away when I was a little girl of three. In our family, they barely make it to fifty.'

"I'll make it short. She wanted to set me up with some woman—if not a wife, let it be a lover. I asked her: 'What's in it for you?' And she said: 'It's interesting. It'll amuse me.' 'I could have,' she said, 'as many men as my heart desires. They still turn their heads after me in the streets as if I were a young girl, but for now, one husband and one Loshikl are enough.' Something is always nagging women on. Men go to war, or go on strike, throw bombs and get themselves banished to Siberia. A female has only one string to her bow. It's even written in the Bible.

"She wasn't just babbling," Blind Itche continued. "One day, I came in for lunch and sitting there already is a little female—slight, with orange-yellow hair, with a string of pearls around her neck. I saw right away that this was no ordinary piece, but well-bred, from a wealthy home. Reitzele introduced her: a doctor's wife. We had lunch and when Reitzele cooked you licked your fingers. We talked and I found out that she employed a cook and a maid. She had everything, but she was just about fed up with her husband, a skin doctor. He practiced at St. Lazar Hospital, and there they treat only cankers, psoriasis, lupus, what have you. All day long she didn't lay

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eyes on him and when he came home in the evening, he buried himself in books and journals about people with the little worms in their blood. 'He knows,' she said, 'everything. But how to satisfy a wife, that he didn't study.'

"When a woman speaks like that to a stranger, the first move is already made. After she left I asked Reitzele: 'Where did you meet this fancy lady?' And she said, 'At Lours's Café.' That's Reitzele for you. She could dress up like a countess and go to the theater, the opera, to Lazienki Gardens. She leaves Smocza Street, and right away she's a lady. The whole thing seemed crazy to me. I wanted Reitzele, not the skin doctor's wife. But Reitzele had already made up her mind. The first time it happened I couldn't believe it myself."

The jail door opened and the guard came in to retrieve the lamp.

"By law, you should be asleep already," he said, "but I'll let it pass."

"We got a little involved in a conversation," Itche the Blind said. "We'll make up the sleep tomorrow."

"I know nothing. Just doing my duty," the guard said.

* * *

"What's the sense in fixing up your lover with another woman?" Berele Zwaniak asked.

The cell had become dark. Only the ends of the lit cigarettes cast a glow on everyone's face. Itche the Blind paused a while. "It doesn't have to make sense," he said. "Why did Leah in the Bible present Jacob with her maid? Why are we sitting here behind bars? I could easily have had a store on Miodowa Street just like the schliemels who came here from the provinces and made fortunes. But you begin something and you can't get out of it. Once there was a professor and he spent so much time pondering lofty thoughts until he came to the conclusion that all men are crazy. Maybe it's really so?"

"I'll bet you that Reitzele got a fee from the skin doctor's wife," Berele Zwaniak said.

Itche the Blind didn't answer right away.

"I don't know," he finally said. "I didn't know then and I certainly don't know now. If she did, she was welcome to it. Why did such a cute little woman have to pay for it? Some men would have paid *her*. On the other hand, if a lady like her were to start up with

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one of her own kind, right away it would turn into a complicated matter. He might want her to divorce the doctor, or whatever they do in high society. Checking into a hotel for people like that is dangerous. All the hotels were full of snoops. Here, at Reitzele's everything went smoothly. Reitzele would go out and leave us alone. She always made up some excuse. She had to go to a store or to a relative. Reitzele didn't need the money. Her husband gave her more than enough. But how does it go? People have big eyes. They are greedy for all kinds of silly thrills. The doctor's wife called herself Fania, but whether that really was her name, I don't know. She never told me where she lived, and I never asked. In those days I didn't brood about things too much. I gorged myself, guzzled it up, had my Reitzele and the other one. When I needed money I headed toward the city markets and I always returned with a little cash. I don't know why, but women always walk around with unlocked purses. That's how it was then, that's how it is today. We talked about things making sense. Does that make any sense?"

"The reason is," Shmuel Kluska said, "that they stuff so many gadgets into their purses they can't get them closed. My own sister does it. The buckle loosens and the purse opens by itself."

"How long did you have the doctor's wife?" Yankel Dezma asked.

"What? It didn't always go as smoothly as with Fania. One time Reitzele set me up with a queer piece. She was so besmirched with makeup that it made me sick. She spoke only Polish, and refused to eat with us. If you offered her a glass of tea she wiped the rim with a handkerchief. She started to interrogate me like a doctor: Did you ever have this? That? She'd brought with her a pink vial of disinfectant. It was all so nauseating that I began to vomit and that was the end of that. I can see her even now, with a thick nose and a mouth like a snout. Another one wore a hat with a huge rim and a veil so dense that you couldn't see her face. When push came to shove, she scurried off. But there were those who attracted me somehow. One was a poor girl from the provinces, a hat-maker. She worked in a store on Zabia Street. She always arrived hungry. If Reitzele gave her a bowl of soup, she asked for more. With Reitzele, it was a madness of sorts. After they left I had to report everything to her: what she said and what I said. Every little thing. She would shriek: 'Tell me more, Loshikl. Don't leave anything out.' I thought that as she got older, she would cool off, but she became more and more embroiled. I had nothing really to complain about but I was getting fed

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up with the whole kit and kaboodle. I didn't need her meals or her lodging anymore. The cops were after me and it wasn't good for me to have a steady address. I moved to Poczejow and there I got myself younger and prettier women. Later on the misfortune with my eye befell me. All I did was make a joke with some denk and the brute pounced on me with a knife. It was nothing but bad luck."

"Did you stop seeing Reitzele forever?" Berele Zwaniak asked.

"Not completely," Itche said. "Whenever we would meet the fire for her was rekindled and I swore that everything would be the way it was. But I saw her less and less. Chazkele had died and when that happened Warsaw was no longer Warsaw. As long as he lived we were his pupils. When he passed away we all became orphans. Quarrels began. Gangs formed. During the strikes in 1905 when the Reds attacked us, there was no one left to fight back. Everyone ran his own way. After Bloody Wednesday the Reds too scattered like mice. Many escaped to America. In the midst of it all Reitzele died."

"Got sick, huh?" Shmuel Kluska asked.

"Who knows what she had? Her time was up. She was fifty to the day. I could sit with you three nights and tell you stories about her and it wouldn't be enough time. Children, it's getting late. Soon they'll come in to wake us."

ROBERT FITZGERALD
1910-1985
AN EARLY CONTRIBUTOR

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Lionel Abel

SIDNEY HOOK'S CAREER (THE PHILOSOPHER IN POLITICS)

In the offices of *Partisan Review*—as everyone knows by now—the magazine's main writers were cut down regularly by Philip Rahv, even though he had sought—and claimed credit for—their contributions to it. There were those, of course, whom Rahv could belittle without argument. But when Sidney Hook's name came up for attack, Delmore Schwartz, if present—and he generally was—would take Rahv on in his former teacher's defense. As I remember, he once closed down a debate over Hook with this judgment: "He is a great critical intelligence."

This is the right estimate of Hook's abilities, and I predict that in time it will stir little dispute. The only reason some may question it today is that Hook, a philosopher by training and talent, has shown the power of his thinking mainly in politics. Political questions are necessarily controversial, and there is nobody so gifted in controversy as not to become himself the object of it. Politics means taking sides, and one can hardly do this without making enemies. Hook has made a goodly number of these, more than is normal—it is hardly to his discredit—with philosophers.

I implied in what I said about Hook's efforts in politics that he has not expressed himself as powerfully in philosophy. And such is indeed the case. We do not read Hook to find new thoughts on the great problems or interesting judgments of his predecessors or contemporaries. We do not read him for definitive judgments of Husserl, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Sartre, or even of John Dewey, to whom he devoted two books, *John Dewey, An Intellectual Portrait* and *John Dewey, Philosopher of Science and Freedom.* But these works were efforts to bring Dewey's thoughts to a wider audience; they were popularizations of his leading ideas rather than discussions aimed at a careful testing of their truth or importance. Dewey, Hook told us in *John Dewey, An Intellectual Portrait*, is a philosopher for creators and producers, for "the plain man." However unobjectionable as a political judgment of Dewey's value to producers, creators, and plain men, this judgment involves a certain disavowal of philosophy. Whatever one thinks of "plain men"—my own taste would go towards men who might be called "exquisite"—some still exist, in Europe, but also here, in America—

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yet I do not think philosophizing can be directed only towards those who might be called "exquisite" any more than toward those who can be called "plain." A philosopher should at least *strive* to be, in Husserl's phrase, a "functionary of humanity,"[1] and humanity must include those who cannot be called plain as well as those who can. The point is important, I think, for it illustrates the fact that there is an implicit disavowal of philosophy in any approach to it that is politically motivated, and this is true even when the motivation for that approach springs from democratic rather than aristocratic values.

I am aware that in his youth Hook wrote some very perceptive pieces on modern philosophers. I am thinking of his piece on Morris Raphael Cohen in the *Journal of Philosophy*, of his review of Husserl's *Ideas* when it appeared in English translation, and of his salute to Hartmann's *Ethics*, which he hailed as the greatest book on ethics since Aristotle. I do not think Hook would defend that judgment today, but since Hartmann's book is so interesting even today, I would defend Hook for having made it when he did. And I must add that in a few brilliant paragraphs of a *New York Sunday Times* article, he completely demolished Ayn Rand's argument in favor of The Selfish Life, as if that were an ideal still awaiting fuller realization. All the same it is not for these pieces—or even for his excellent essays on Thurman Arnold and Kenneth Burke—that Delmore Schwartz can be justified in having called Hook a "great critical intelligence."

I myself first became aware of Hook's political judgment when I read his attack on the theory of social fascism which, backed by none other than Joseph Stalin, had become a dogma in the Communist International and aided Hitler in coming to power. This theory justified the Communists in making no distinction between socialists and fascists; it had divided the German masses and given Hitler his chance. Hook's analysis of the theory was a model of destructive logic, an exercise in "deconstruction" long before that term had been advanced. (It is to be noted that at the time—the early thirties—an effort had been made to hide or at least cover the negative and painful aspects of criticism by saying that criticism could be "constructive";

1. I think Whitehead showed himself to be a philosopher in Husserl's understanding of the role when he pointed out that when Rome fell, the barbarians at least enjoyed themselves. We intuitively recognize that some aspect of philosophy is here revealed, for if the remark had been made by a poet or a historian we would credit the one who made it with being "philosophical."

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in fact the term "constructive criticism" was widely used. Unhappily, the optimism of the period has long since gone. Today we see a special emphasis on the negative and painful in criticism, and the term honored at the moment is "deconstruction.")[2] His essay, "Social Fascism," appeared in V. F. Calverton's *The Modern Monthly*. In making his case, Hook also took apart the theory of "*objective*" treason to the working class—treason, that is, notwithstanding one's intentions. This theory, as Hook made clear, required Communists to believe that Stalin was infallible.

Still another instance of Hook's judgment in politics was his defense of the war effort of the United States government during World War II. Such support was by no means general among American intellectuals, and it was particularly limited among those who held Marxist views and who defended socialist values. Even before Pearl Harbor and the American entry into the war, the Trotskyist movement, which had influenced politically those of the left-wing intellectuals who were not Stalinist, had split into two groups, both of which insisted that if war came the United States and its probable allies should receive no support from the labor movement. When war did come, both groups maintained this view. It was not until the end of the war that Shachtman characterized as "mad" the war position of the Trotskyists he led. Recently, certain former Shachtmanites have explained the views they held during the war as follows: they gave critical support to the United States, they now say, but simply did not make such support explicit. Now this line is hardly honest. In politics, the Shachtmanites were a propaganda group, and only that.

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2. Just another thought about "deconstruction"—it is probably wrong of me to dismiss it as if it were no more than a result of the negativism of our period or the personal sadism of certain critics. Let me say first, then, repeating what John Searle already has said in the *New York Review of Books*, that as far as philosophers are concerned, deconstructionist attacks on metaphysics are nothing new. What about deconstructionist attacks on the metaphysics expressed, or latent, in literary works? Here there was indeed something new. For example, the late Paul de Man attacked Marcel Proust for having yielded to metaphysics in preferring metaphor to metonomy. Now when I asked Roman Jacobson, who had pointed up the distinction between metaphor and metonomy, if de Man's use of his idea was not an exaggeration of the difference between the two kinds of trope, he replied that it most certainly was. What Jacobson could not answer, though, was the charge that it was the *very exaggeration* of the difference between the two kinds of trope which had made critics take up his idea.

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What they did not support explicitly in their propaganda they had no way of supporting in any credible sense; and their propaganda, in fact, was directed against the war effort of the United States and of those who supported it.

Hook's interests were, I believe, basically political, but he had been trained, as I have noted, in philosophy. It should come as no surprise, then, that some of his best *political* efforts were in philosophy proper.

Here, a personal recollection may be clarifying. During the thirties, those of us who were drawn, as so many were, to the idea of revolutionary action—because of the Depression, because of Hitler, because of the Soviet Union (about which we knew very little)—had begun to think of adopting Marxism as a viewpoint in politics and as a general philosophy. We were then faced by this question: What about dialectical materialism? Was it still valid as a doctrine? Or was it a bit of antiquated metaphysics? And what did it have to do with Marx's basic views, with his notion of the class struggle as the motor of progress, with his doctrine of surplus value, and of the revolutionary role of the working class? Could not these ideas be discussed without talking about dialectics? And wasn't there a contradiction between dialectics and materialism, so that to speak of dialectical materialism seemed like talking about idealistic materialism or materialistic idealism, a good thing to talk about if indeed there were something of that sort, but wasn't it rather childish to think there was?

Hook did not reject dialectics at first, for he had a period of flirtation with the Communist Party while he was at work on *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx.* But by 1934 the Communists had attacked his book, and one of Hook's responses was a remarkable article against dialectics in nature which he published in 1937 in the *Marxist Quarterly.* In this piece he took apart the Communist view derived from Engels, that there is a dialectic in nature as well as in history. Dialectic in history, Hook was ready to accept, but only if one did not sharply distinguish it from scientific method.

It may be asked: was there any real need to connect Marx's social theories and notions about the economy with an overall view in philosophy? Max Eastman argued, as I remember, that there was not.

But now Marx had characterized his view of the world as a composite of British economics, French social theory, and classical German philosophy. What Hook did was to effect the substitution of Dewey's instrumentalism (strongly influenced by German idealism) for the dialectic of Hegel which had captivated Marx; in parallel ef-

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forts later on, Sartre substituted existential phenomenology, and Althusser substituted structuralism (not, to be sure, Lévi-Strauss's structuralism), for Hegelianism in the restatements they made of Marx's view. Evidently one had to substitute something for classical German philosophy in any effort to make a reasonable whole of the Marxist system. Why was this? Because a higher level of generalization was needed to connect the views Marx had taken in history, sociology, and economics. This higher level of generalization Marx found in the dialectics of Hegel who had also said that philosophy is the restatement of the *time* in ideas. Now the time of Marx was not the time of the thirties, the forties, the fifties, or the sixties, so these later decades had to be expressed differently from the way in which Marx expressed his own period. Actually, Hook's substitution of Dewey for Hegel in the Marxist system may well have been the most intelligent effort yet made to make of Marxism a systematic whole, and instrumentalism did express the time of the thirties in ideas. One might say in criticism, though, of Hook's effort, that the time he expressed was of rather short duration, as was also the time Sartre stated existentially. And it was a very tiny time indeed that went into the synthesis of Althusser.

Having argued for Hook's judgment in politics, I find that now I shall have to argue against Hook himself, for in his memoir, "Breaking with the Communists," (*Commentary*, February 1984), he claims that on one very important matter he had been in fact politically "obtuse." Apparently he had expected the Communists to prevent Hitler from coming to power, or failing that to overthrow the Nazi government (with the help of the Soviet Union). Now were these expectations—shared by many at the time—due to "political obtuseness"? I think not. I suggest that Sidney Hook knows that nobody is going to think him really obtuse, and on the other hand he does not like to dwell on the depth of his early commitment to Communism.[3] He is

3. He does admit this to some extent in his *Commentary* piece, for he notes that his book *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx* ". . . had played an important role in drawing Oxford and Cambridge students into the Communist movement." This makes nonsense of Richard Rorty's contention in Paul Kurtz's *Festschrift* for Hook, *Sidney Hook, Philosopher of Democracy and Humanism*, that ". . . Dewey and Hook fought jointly . . . against the temptations that Marxism held out to American intellectuals in the thirties." Certainly one of such temptations was conversion to the Communist faith, and as we have seen Hook admits to having converted Oxford and Cambridge students to Communism.

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here indulging—many writers of memoirs do this—in self-exculpation by way of self-accusation, which Ezra Pound describes thus:

To confess wrong without losing rightness.

I shall try to defend Hook against more powerful attacks on him than his own; about that I can only state an opinion: his faith in the Communists, it seems to me, as in many an instance of misjudgment by others, was simply due to faith, not to lack of intelligence.

The main criticism of Hook's political thinking has been directed at the positions he took after World War II, during which, as we saw, he supported the United States and its allies. But in the aftermath of the fighting came the Cold War (most certainly declared by Stalin, as everyone in the Communist Party knew when Earl Browder was expelled). It was then that Hook first took the view that Communism, which as a political doctrine he had argued for, had become, by actions of the Stalinists in Europe, little more than a conspiracy to overthrow democratic governments; it was no longer the progressive political faith he had once taken it to be. Hook had, in fact, voted for Foster and Ford in the 1932 Presidential election.

This latter judgment by Sidney Hook of the Communist movement as a power-grabbing conspiracy left out of intellectual acccount the ideas of Karl Marx which Hook himself had propagated in works like *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx* and *From Hegel to Marx*. To be sure, Hook was responding to changes in the Communist movement and to the new power-position of the Soviets in Europe. All the same, his judgment of the Communists in his 1953 book *Heresy, Yes, Conspiracy! No!* ignored substantial aspects of the Communists' intellectual tradition, thus leaving something to be desired *philosophically*.

But now if the view Hook took of the Communists during the cold war is to be criticized, then is the view of those who attacked him for it to be approved? I do not think so. Against Hook's view was the intellectual heritage of the Communist movement, which makes it hard to treat that movement (as is sometimes urged) as we would a Nazi or fascist movement. For there is no comparable heritage of ideas behind any of the right-wing movements which may be called fascist, as we have seen them in Europe, Asia, or South America. Thus Hook's decision at a certain point to regard the Communists as aiming essentially at espionage, and at the isolation of the United States from its NATO allies, seems, at least at first sight, *philosophically* unacceptable, notwithstanding the *political* reasons for it. On the

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other hand, those who charged Hook with McCarthyism, intolerance, and support for right-wing American imperialist policies, and who simply pointed to the intellectual background of the Communist movement, left out of their own account these facts: after the defeat of Hitler, the Communists were no longer trying to win the minds of men by ideological struggle; the Cold War had been declared by Stalin and imposed by fiat on the American as on the West European parties; espionage, which had been a secondary aspect of the Communist movement, had become one of its major aims. But if Hook's critics were most certainly wrong *politically*, were they at least right *philosophically* against the philosopher?

To defend Hook on this point I shall rely on the thinking of Martin Heidegger, a philosopher for whom Hook has never expressed any special admiration. Heidegger maintains in one of his essays, "The Essence of Truth" in *Holzwege*, that in the search for truth, the philosopher has the right, not often, not always, but at critical points in his thinking, to *consent to error.* I suggest that what Heidegger meant by this phrase Hook's changed attitude towards Communism has made clear, for Hook here was willing to overlook what may have seemed like undeniable facts in order to drive home an important political conclusion. Now a philosopher's consent to err can turn out to be, as James Joyce said about the mistakes of men of talent, "portals to discovery," and such indeed is the case with Hook's omission of the intellectual background to Communism in his judgment of the Communists. We have learned recently from the Russian expert, the late Leonard Schapiro, that nothing Lenin wrote before the Bolsheviks took power had any relation to what the Bolsheviks did after power was taken, and the Russian dissenter and philosopher Alexander Zinoviev has gone even further, asserting that there is no *relationship whatever between present day Communist society and the ideas of Marx and his followers.* It may well be that the so-called "intellectual background of Communism" has proved a hindrance to our making a proper judgment of the Soviets, and of those who follow its line.

In a remarkable new book, *How Democracies Perish*, the French political philosopher and journalist Jean-François Revel describes the struggle between the Soviets and the West as a match game between two teams, one of which—the Soviets—hopes for victory but will accept a tie, the other—the West—hopes for a tie and will accept defeat. And Revel brilliantly explores the path followed by American Presidents from Franklin Delano Roosevelt on in unnecessary concessions to the Soviets, all leading to the present American position

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of political and military inferiority to its rival superpower. This is not the place to go into Revel's detailed discussion, but I can at least give his list of the failures of our presidents in dealing with the Russians, beginning with Eisenhower. Suffice it to say that Eisenhower, with John Foster Dulles as his Secretary of State, never once suggested to the Russians after the 1953 riots in East Germany that they withdraw their forces and indicate their future policy towards East Germany by signing a treaty of peace. From statements made at the time by Beria, we know that the Russians fully expected us to demand this of them, and Beria indicated that he was ready to make concessions to us. Kennedy yielded to Khrushchev in Vienna, permitting the Russians to build a wall dividing the city, an action in no sense envisaged in our agreements with them; he then told the masses of Berlin assembled to hear an American President, "*Ich bin ein Berliner.*" Johnson accepted the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia, which none of his liberal advisors had foreseen, and Nixon agreed to the arrangements with North Vietnam, which, with Soviet backing, they were soon to violate. Ford signed the Helsinki accords legitimizing the Soviets' hold on Eastern Europe, in return for which they were supposed to respect the human rights of their dissidents, and moderate their expansionist policies. As we know, the Russians have not kept their part of the bargain, and they become extremely hostile when this is noted by our journalists. Carter was completely "surprised" by the highly characteristic action of the Russians in invading Afghanistan. And after all that President Reagan was accused as a warmonger by the Democratic Party's candidates for the presidency in practically the same terms as those used by Gromyko and Chernenko.

In 1980, at a conference held at Cerisy to discuss the writings (on writing) of Jacques Derrida, Lacoue-Labarthe, a young French philosopher, wanted to know why the philosopher who had launched the method of deconstruction, and had set about deconstructing Rousseau, Husserl, Heidegger, Saussure, and Lacan, had so far spared Marxism, which, said Lacoue-Labarthe, is the most intimidating of contemporary ideologies. The answer of Derrida, who was present at the conference, is not given in his own words but in a restatement by the editors who published the volume *Les Fins de L'homme.* I am assuming their summation to be a correct version of Derrida's thought. He declared (according to the editors) that the reason he did not wish to deconstruct Marxism was this: he did not want to weaken its force as a revolutionary ideology (that force is, by

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the way, today largely spent). But what is interesting here is that the motive given by Derrida for sparing Marxism is a purely political one: had he taken up intellectually the challenge to him he would have to have said *it is much too easy to deconstruct Marxism for the task to be worth doing.* Marxism is a composite whose elements can only be made to cohere by a philosophical act of force, such as was provided by Hegel's dialectic, Hook's scientific method, Sartre's existential phenomenology, Althusser's structuralism. If one does not force its elements to cohere in a philosophically oriented synthesis, Marxism deconstructs by itself without the effort of hostile critics.

And as deconstructed, Marxism tends to become the kind of oppressive ideological debris, which, falling on friend and foe alike, tends to make all objectives vague, indefinite, hazy, and unglamorous in the extreme. In general, groups which have issued from the Marxism of the thirties and wanted to maintain a coherent philosophy may be said to fall on the one side or the other of two political extremes: an unreflective and unreckoning activism which never asks itself what aspect of Marxist doctrine it still accepts, or an indefinite reflection on Marxism which never leads to a politically active line. For example, the old Marxist groups we knew in the thirties might well have tried to connect themselves with the feminist groups which formed in the sixties, and this without any opportunism on their part, for male dominance did go with unfairness to the other sex. But the old Marxist groups, while they might have supported feminist groups and sought their support, would not have substituted the feminist goals for their own; only in the name of their own goals could they have justified common action with the feminists. But now we see the former Marxists still on the scene and still calling themselves radicals, making the goals of the feminists their very *raison d'etre*; the former Marxists take up with dissenting groups of all sorts —the feminists are only one of such groups—not to win converts to their cause, but to yield some evidence that they have a cause of some kind; they seek conversion to the goals of others in order to have a goal they can still think "radical."

It is to be noted that it was only in the name of a Marxism that was, or was taken to be, a total system, that is to say, a whole, that masses of men could be recruited to the enterprise of a revolution against capitalism. The careful selections of elements of Marx's system, whatever value this might have for thought, involves the rejection of action or indifference to action. It is only Marxism taken as a whole that has been capable of motivating what Hook once called

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"the greatest mass movement since Christianity." The phrase he used to place the Communist movement in history is most interesting and instructive, for it also places the Communist movement in a particular history, the history of religion. Is it not religion, in fact, that causes men to take ideas seriously enough to act on them, especially when such action involves self-sacrifice? And the greatest mass movement since Christianity was indeed the expression of a secular religion, as in the nineteenth century, the nationalism which called on men to die for the fatherland was a secular religion. From which notions we arrive at a surprising judgment of Hook's effort to justify the Marxist system (even dialectics when restricted to history and society) in terms of Dewey's philosophy of science. Was not Hook functioning here as a reconciler of religion and science, the religion of course being a secular one, the scientific doctrine that of his time? At this date Hook's efforts in *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx* and *From Hegel to Marx*, taken with his essay in the *Marxist Quarterly* against Engel's view of the dialectic, are like nothing so much as the efforts of philosophers and theologians over the last centuries to reconcile Christianity and science, as in the thirteenth century St. Thomas tried to reconcile Aristotelian reason and Christian faith. It is to be noted, too, that the recent efforts of the German theorist of the Frankfurt school, Jürgen Habermas, to connect some selected elements of Marxism with aspects of American pragmatism, notably the ideas of Pierce and Dewey, have nothing whatever to do with Hook's thinking during the thirties, for the thought of Habermas has no relation to the movement of masses of men. It indicates only that pragmatism is still an important reflection on science and has to be taken into account in any overall view of society. But Habermas is an intellectual talking to intellectuals, and his main injunction to them is that intellectuals should talk. I agree that they should, and of course they really do not have to be told.

Perhaps now I can justify the judgment that Hook's version of Marxism was far and away the most intelligent, being an attempt to reconcile it as a religion with science, and science properly understood, given the time. Sartre's effort to make a synthesis of Marxism and existentialism, though full of brilliant insights, was in a way a trivial affair by comparison; it amounted to trying to unify a religion of the individual with the collectivist Communist doctrine, and of course one of the two components had to give way; in the sixties Sartre rejected his religion of the individual, and with it his own most original ideas. As for Althusser, his effort is altogether insignificant,

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being an attempt to relate hard-core Communism to a particular and still controversial theory related only to certain social sciences, and with no relation to science as a whole.

When it is understood that Hook's role as a believer was to reconcile the religion of Communism with modern science, we can better understand the role he played as an unbeliever, when he lost his faith in "the God that failed" and began to criticize those liberals who after the Moscow trials, and the Doctors plot, continued to be soft on Communism.

Hook is, I think, like a Thomas Aquinas who, having completed his *Summa*, finally throws in his lot with an avant-garde of the Enlightenment (there was of course nothing corresponding to the Enlightenment in the thirteenth century), raising against the new secular church Voltaire's old slogan, "ecrasez l'infame." So the philosopher has had two distinct periods of opinion and of opinion-making, representing two distinct directions of his thought. Such a dividedness of opinion was something the Parisian friends I saw, when I visited them in 1962, held against Wittgenstein. They claimed it was surely a fault in a philosopher to have held more than one view, at least after maturity. There may be a real point here, speaking generally, but I feel that some exception to the argument must be made for those philosophers who are our contemporaries. The age we live in is a strange one, and one of its strange aspects may be seen in the fact that some of our better philosophers have felt the need to change views once deeply held. Wittgenstein was not the only modern philosopher to contradict his previously held positions. Husserl changed his views at least twice in his career, so did Heidegger, and Sartre also. So we should be less surprised by the fact that Hook changed his views of Marxism and Communism so decisively. But his views in justification and in denunciation of revolutionary Marxism as a set of beliefs, and as motives for action, were in both cases centered on what is certainly the major problem as it is—to borrow a phrase from the late Hannah Arendt—"the burden of our time."

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Leo Ou-fan Lee

LETTER FROM BEIJING: ALIENATION, HUMANISM, AND MODERNISM IN POST-MAO CHINA

One evening in Beijing some time ago I talked to two young Chinese writers whom I shall call "Yin" and "Yang." The topic was *yihua*, the Chinese translation of the Marxist concept of alienation. They said that the successive political campaigns of the past thirty years, particularly in the decade (1966–1976) of the Cultural Revolution, had resulted in "estranging" the Chinese people—particularly youth—from their "true humanity"; they had been urged to emulate models of "exemplary ideological behavior" so compulsively that they felt they had been turned into nonhuman models. Thus the two writers wanted to tear off the ideological masks in creative writing in order to rediscover their human essence.

This is, of course, a curious paraphrase of the theoretical statement which Marx had first expounded about the alienating effect of money in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* of 1844, a text that is now receiving much attention in China. Yet in the concrete Chinese context—specifically the case of a generation of youngsters and former Red Guards who experienced the Cultural Revolution from its initial euphoria to final disillusionment—this "applied" notion of alienation has a particular human pathos. (It is striking that the generation of young Polish Communists in 1956, led by Leszek Kolakowski, also used the theme of alienation to turn their fire on Stalinist orthodoxy, a theme which the orthodox theorists had denied as possible in Communist society.)

Though the two writers I talked to shared the same interpretation of alienation, they disagreed about how to deal with it in literature. Mr. Yang argued that creative writing should remain a political act exposing the hypocrisy of the official Maoist dogma and the countless problems it had produced; only by a relentless confrontation with the socio-political reality could a writer possibly effect some changes. Mr. Yin presented an artistic counterargument: the Chinese had had a surfeit of politics, which had all but eclipsed literature; creative writing, therefore, should have nothing to do with politics; it should be concerned only with probing the human heart

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in order to restore, through art, the dignity of the self. An old argument, and renewed, once more, in a novel setting!

I was already familiar with the "Yang" argument, for since 1978, two years after the death of Mao and the downfall of the Gang of Four, a number of literary works had appeared revealing the dark side of life in socialist China—bureaucratic corruption, "backdoorism," special privileges, persecution of intellectuals, even crimes of murder and rape. This type of social expose was in tune with Deng Xiaoping's effort to discredit the Cultural Revolution. But I was somewhat dubious about the feasibility of Mr. Yin's hopes. In a society where politics takes abiding command, there seems to be no prospect for literature to transcend it. Notions such as the sanctity of art and the dignity of the human individual have been castigated over the past thirty years as bourgeois and even counterrevolutionary. Little did I expect that Mr. Yin's position would win a large following among writers and readers and become a central motif in creative writing today. Even more fascinating, the theme of alienation has emerged as the subject of a nationwide controversy, even though the term itself is "mangled" in so many different ways; the obvious point is that it is a legitimate way of remaining "Marxist," while levelling sharp criticism at dogma, at political practice, and even at the Party itself.

Shortly after my conversation with the young writers, two prominent Party intellectuals began to raise the issue of "socialist alienation" in official newspapers and journals. Wang Ruoshui, a deputy editor of the Party newspaper, *People's Daily*, and a daring Marxist theoretician, published an article titled "On the Problem of Alienation" (in the eighth issue of the journal *News Front* in 1980) in which he charged that China was currently beset with three kinds of alienation: in thought (the cult of personality); in politics (bureaucratism); and in economics (mismanagement and waste). This opening volley created shock waves in intellectual circles both inside and outside the Party.

The other leading writer on alienation was Zhou Yang, the longtime Maoist commissar of literature, who had masterminded the purges of scores of writers from the mid-1950s to the early 1960s, until he himself was purged during the Cultural Revolution. After his rehabilitation and return to office as chairman of the All-China Federation of Writers and Artists, Zhou made public apologies to the writers he had once purged and adopted a consistently liberal policy toward matters of creative writing *against* rigid Party control.

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Zhou was also Wang Ruoshui's patron and ally. From Wang's other articles we learn that in the early 1960s the two men had discussed some of the theoretical debates taking place among East European Marxists. Their discussion, stopped during the Cultural Revolution, now was brought into the open. On March 7, 1983, at a meeting commemorating the centennial of Marx's death, at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Zhou Yang discussed alienation as part of his "inquiry into several problems of Marxism." And he echoed the same charges raised by Wang Ruoshui.

In Zhou's speech, the definition of alienation is more properly abstract: "In its process of development, a subject by its own action creates something which is its opposite, and which then becomes an external, alien force turning around and opposing or controlling the subject itself." In practical terms, however, the definition may well refer to the Chinese political system which has begotten its own "alien forces," and Zhou argued that they must be confronted in order to be resolved.

Whereas both Zhou and Wang give due prominence to the 1844 *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, their arguments are less concerned with Marx's discussion of the alienating nature of capitalist production but, inspired perhaps by the East European Marxists, they insist on a humanistic meaning to Marx's economic insight so as to make the concept of alienation relevant to post-Mao China. Wang Ruoshui, in particular, emphasized the humanistic background of Marx's formulations of alienation in order to buttress his thesis that "the human being is the starting point of Marxism" and that this position of humanism in Marx's philosophical system has been "neglected by us."

In a 1983 article titled "The Case for Humanism" published in a Shanghai Party journal, *Wenhui bao*, Wang Ruoshui went so far as to open his article with a sentence evoking the first line of the *Communist Manifesto*: "A spectre's shadow wanders in the Chinese intellectual circles—the spectre of humanism." Indeed, the twin "spectres" of alienation and humanism seem to have so overshadowed the Chinese literary and scholarly scene as to become something of an intellectual vogue!

The views of Wang and Zhou provoked strong rebuttals from leading Party ideologues, including Deng Liqun (head of the Party's propaganda department), Xing Fensi (director of the Institute of Philosophy, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences), Ru Xin (vice president of the CASS and formerly deputy director of the

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Philosophy Institute), and Hu Qiaomu, a member of the Party's Central Committee and its preeminent theoretician, whose critique was published in the official *People's Daily* on January 24, 1984. The orthodox spokesmen charged that this humanistic view of Marxism neglects the context of the economic "base" from which the concept derives its meaning—that is, the phenomenon of capitalist exploitation. This in turn questions whether alienation could exist in a socialist society—where private ownership and capitalist exploitation presumably no longer exist. As Hu Qiaomu stated, the ultimate issue is whether humanism should be deemed an "ethical principle and moral norm" (presumably a small part of Marxism, one of the not-well-thought-out positions of the early Marx) or whether humanism constitutes nothing less than a "world outlook" and a theory of history. If the implications point toward the latter, then the consequences would be tantamount to a denial of Marxism.

The theoretical verbosity on both sides, however, does not disguise the elementary issue: the real target of the proponents of alienation and humanism is not so much Marx as Mao: their language is "Marxist," but it is the only way to get at the ultimate source of the problem, Maoism. It was Mao Zedong who first laid down the official critique of humanism (the sense of belief in "universal human nature") in his famous talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art in 1942. In his concluding remarks, he flatly asserted that "human nature in the abstract, going beyond class, does not exist"; it could be defined only in the concrete, in terms of "class nature." Mao's opinion became the official canon: literature had to be subjected to rigid class analysis, while humanism was linked to "subjectivism" and "individualism," as bourgeois or reactionary beliefs, to be purged from the writer's general "outlook."

When during the episode of the first "Hundred Flowers" in 1957 a number of writers, such as Ba Ren and Qian Gurong, began to discuss humanism, they were castigated as rightists and silenced. For the next two decades, humanism was almost a taboo subject. It is, therefore, no accident that one of the first anti-Maoist manifestations after his death in 1976 was the resurgence of humanism—with Wang Ruoshui as its most articulate spokesman. And given this historical context, it is not difficult to decipher the hidden meaning in the following sentences from Wang: "For many years there has been a prevailing notion, namely to reduce the totality of human nature to class nature and to consider human nature in a class society as equivalent to class nature; hence the relations between human

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beings can only be class relations. This view not only does not conform to actual conditions, it also does not conform to Marxism."

In October 1983, the Party officially launched a campaign "to eliminate spiritual pollution," the chief architects of the campaign being the orthodox ideologues of Hu Qiaomu and Deng Liqun. One of the first victims was Wang Ruoshui, who was removed from his position at the *People's Daily*, along with the editor-in-chief, Hu Jiwei. Perhaps because of his fame, Zhou Yang was not attacked by name, but his views on alienation were roundly denounced.

Although on the surface the campaign was meant to combat signs of urban decadence as a result of Western influence (such as pop songs from Hong Kong and Taiwan, videotapes of "obscene" movies, etc.) the underlying motives were the reaction the former Cultural Revolution "radicals," entrenched in the Party and the People's Liberation Army, had against liberalizing trends in literature and thought. (It is not clear why Deng Xiaoping himself apparently supported them, though it was rumored that he later regarded his action as a major mistake.) Of the four major charges of "polluting" influences made by Deng Liqun, head of the Party's propaganda department, two are directly related to intellectual issues: "the pursuit of individual hedonism, individualism, anarchism, and liberalism"; and "the expression of opinions in writing and speech which are counter to the socialist system."

Deng Liqun's reference to the various "isms" points to a fairly widespread phenomenon, especially among urban youth: the spiritual disillusionment with both Marxism and Maoism. In the search for alternatives, many in the younger generation have embraced such diverse trends as Western democracy, socialist systems of East European and Scandinavian countries, social Darwinism, existentialism, Christianity, religious mysticism, as well as various kinds of individualism and "individual hedonism."

Many of these tendencies are reflected in a number of fictional works which have generated considerable criticism from "conservatives" in both Party and literary circles. Two stories by Shen Rong, one of the leading women writers, depict the confused reactions of lower-echelon Party cadres toward arguments of Western literary modernism and existentialism; one story contains a long discourse on Sartre. A novelette titled "On the Same Horizon" by Zhang Xinxin, another woman writer, features a young protagonist who paints tigers. Her story centers on an obsessive discussion of Chinese and Bengal tigers and a comparison of their capacities for

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survival in different natural environments. Because of this theme, Zhang was charged with advocating the "erroneous" social Darwinist view of "survival of the fittest." But the real thrust of this rather sprawling narrative is human nature—its cynical manifestation in the psychological makeup of a ruthless social climber.

Even Marx becomes a protagonist, in a recent play written by Sha Yexin, the young writer whose previous work, "If I Were Real" (a satirical and poignant depiction of a youngster pretending to be the son of a high-ranking general), created a stir for its exposure of snobbery and special privileges. Sha's new play, titled "The Intimate Life of Marx," is clearly designed as a tribute to Marx as a human being. As the "author" interviews him in the play's prologue, Marx professes to like cigars and jokingly denies that he is an ideological "Marxist" because he strongly objects to idolization. Reportedly, Sha had conscientiously read several biographies of Marx before he wrote the play. Still, he was criticized for "opposing Marx the man to Marx the revolutionist," inflating the former and belittling the latter. The charge, in sum, is humanism.

The official reactions to these works stem from a distrust of new interpretations or intellectual alternatives. Although the Party has not spoken out in every controversy, its "paternalistic" role is evident, especially in its condescending attitude towards the younger writers: since they are likely to go astray, they should be shown the right path. Given the authority of the Party, it often is obeyed. Despite the official statement that open debate and persuasion (instead of imposing ideological "hats" or "wielding sticks" for attack) should be encouraged, at times when some members of the Party leadership thought the youngsters had gone too far, their corrective orders carried all the coercive force and psychological pressure of a formal political campaign. The pronouncements by Hu Qiaomu and Deng Liqun against "spiritual pollution" exemplify such an attitude. They can be overruled only by other—equally senior and paternalistic—Party leaders. They may sometimes disagree with the means adopted, but not the ultimate end of reining in the strayed intellectuals, and bringing them back into the ideological fold of socialism as defined by the Party.

A vivid illustration of this paternalism is the scandal involving three nonfictional accounts—self-exposures—by a young woman, Yu Luojin. The first two pieces, entitled "A Winter's Fairy-tale" and "A Spring's Fairy-tale", amount to a confession of her unhappy married lives, first with a peasant and then a worker. "A Spring's Fairy-

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tale" recounts her sordid affair with a fifty eight-year old high-ranking cadre. Her rather daring descriptions (including a graphic, though brief, account of her first wedding night) created a furor soon after these pieces were published. Some Party elders voiced their displeasure in the newspapers, generating a wave of conservative "public opinion" that accompanied the court hearings of her divorce case. This overreaction itself met with criticism from some quarters. But luckily for the heroine of this little comedy, she succeeded in obtaining her divorce and is now happily remarried. The third installment of her saga, a short narrative which includes a defense of her case by her third husband has, however, received its share of moral censure.

Yet even this romantic *scandale* manifests a degree of humanism. Yu Luojin chose to reveal her emotional and sexual tribulations in a fashion that reminds one of Ding Ling, China's foremost woman writer, who had shaken the literary world half a century ago by a daring confessional story, "Diary of Miss Sophie." Now acknowledged as one of the first feminist works in modern Chinese literature, the diary registers the ambivalent emotional and sexual feelings of the heroine toward two men. Like Miss Sophie, Yu Luojin in her own autobiographical accounts strives for personal emancipation from the rigidities of conventional society. But behind the particular pathos of Yu's story, as well as numerous real-life stories like hers, is imprinted the memory of the political background: the radical ideology imposed by the Cultural Revolution had served to "dehumanize" the human individual by submerging him in social roles; the Maoist ideal of public collectivity (*gong*) had eclipsed any consideration of the private self (*si*). Yu's autobiographical trilogy, a *cri du couer*, is a plea for privacy and personal happiness.

Thus it can be said that in Chinese literature today, following a brief phase of political and social exposé (1978–80), the dominant motif has been the preoccupation with self: subjectivity and individualism have become two salient motifs of the humanistic ethos enveloping creative writing. Mao's injunction of Yan'an is now stood on its head. The young writer I talked to that evening in Beijing, Mr. "Yin," proved to be prophetic.

As Yu Luojin's case illustrates, the most eloquent spokesmen of this romantic, self-centered humanism are writers now in their thirties or early forties, most of whom had themselves participated actively as young Red Guards or as their sympathizers in the early phase of the Cultural Revolution. One such writer is Dai Houying, now an instructor of Chinese literature in Shanghai. Dai once served

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as a guard of a male prisoner who apparently was a poet and a humanist. Their romance—she reportedly fell in love with him—became the subject of her first novel, *The Death of a Poet.* The sequel to it, entitled *Ren ah ren* (which could be rendered as "man, ah man" without its male-chauvinist tinge), became a political *cause scandale* when it was published in Canton in late 1980. The novel's central protagonist is a young man who has written a treatise on the compatibility of Marxism and humanism. Thus life and art, fact and fiction, have obviously been intertwined; *Ren ah ren* can itself be read as the author's humanist manifesto:

> I am no longer willing to suppress the call of my heart . . . I am now no longer afraid of (wearing) the hat of 'self-expression' . . . In creative writing an author must never forget about herself; she (or he) should do her best to discover herself, to express her own unique sensibility and perception.

Even more striking than this personal admission, is Dai's further argument that the standard technique of realism (which has been upheld by most political figures and writers as a revolutionary orthodoxy) is insufficient to describe the complex emotions of the self, and that she would favor the Western techniques associated with modernism: symbols, dreams, abstractions, absurdities, and stream-of-consciousness. As a novice modernist, Dai Houying is not very successful. But she has certainly opened up a new avenue: to put a Western legacy—the result of an artistic effort at "dehumanization" (in Ortega y Gasset's famous description of modernism)—in the service of the Chinese cause of humanism.

The issue of modernism in modern Chinese literature is complex. Historically speaking, modernism was introduced to China in the early 1930s with the European trends of the avant-garde; from reading translations of Baudelaire a small number of Chinese poets moved to assimilate the works of Eliot and Auden. But the limited experimentations by some of them in the symbolist mode (such as Li Jinfa, Dai Wangshu, and Bian Zhilin) did not find a ready reception on a literary scene dominated by leftist ideology and in a China embroiled in war and chaos. The major emphasis of creative writing, especially after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937, was social-realistic. Even before Mao's Yan'an Talks, the notion of "art for art's sake" was denounced by the majority of the Chinese writers. It was not until the early 1960s in Taiwan that a group of university

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students began seriously to introduce the major modernist writers; Kafka, Joyce, Faulkner, Virginia Woolf, as well as T. S. Eliot.

In a way, it is not surprising to see modernism now taking some hold in post-Mao China. As Mr. Yin so eloquently told me, life during the Cultural Revolution was as "absurd" as anything in Kafka's works. I was struck by his mention of Kafka in the same breath with Sartre, Camus, Erich Fromm, and "Jonathan Livingston Seagull." (The latter seems a curious choice, but perhaps it is because young people think it champions personal freedom.) These names were among the first of Western modernists to interest young readers like him. Soon afterwards, a translation of Kafka's *The Castle* was published, and stories with a Kafkaesque tone began to appear in official literary journals.

The first major writer in post-Mao China who claims to use a modernist technique in his works is Wang Meng. A former rightist now firmly reestablished, Wang Meng openly experimented in such stories as "The Eye of the Night," "Butterfly," "The Voice of Spring," and "Bolshevik Salute" with what he considered to be "stream-of-consciousness" fiction.

In addition to his modernism, Wang's humanism achieves that odd affirmation of life, a "positive" trait which is in tune with the Party's guideline to "look forward" toward a future of the "four modernizations." As a result, Wang has become well established politically—one of the favorite model writers of the new Party leadership.

The younger writers, particularly poets, have explored new techniques in order to probe their own selves. Some of them had begun writing in the pages of a most unusual "unofficial" journal called *Today*, which was first established in October 1978 by a group of students and workers headed by two poets, Bei Dao and Mang Ke. The journal began as "big-character posters" on Beijing's "democracy wall" and as the major artistic voice in a chorus clamoring for political democracy. After the wall was banned in 1980, the journal was circulated in mimeographed copies and distributed rather openly in Beijing, although it failed to obtain official permission for publication. Like all journals of its kind, it stopped appearing by the end of 1981. Yet the cause it championed has not died with it, but has received tacit support from a number of established writers.

Some of the *Today* poets—especially its two founders Bei Dao and Mang Ke—seem more inclined to write shorter poems; even their

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long poems are composed of many sections of short verses. In my view this penchant for brevity is an intentional desire to "reflect" the poet's fragmented psyche and the chaos of life—which fits the mood of the younger generation. In addition, the younger poets are much more eager to experiment with poetic imagery.

The veteran poet Ai Qing has become one of the most severe critics of the *Today* poetry, complaining that it is too difficult to understand, even for intellectual readers like himself—not to mention the "masses." The term "obscure poetry" (*menglong shi*) has thus become the detractors' label for the poetry practiced by the *Today* poets and others who write like them, such as the young poet Gu Cheng.

Certainly more is at stake than the mere issue of incomprehensibility. These "obscure" poems sprout on native soil, the fruits of a purposeful effort to depoliticize literature and to deflate the ideological weight of realism. The objective of the young poets is the same as that of the novelists and playwrights of humanism mentioned above—to use their writing for the exploration of the human self. Gu Cheng characterizes the rise of this new poetry in the following manner:

> I think that what makes this new poetry so new is because there appears in it a 'self'—a self with the special features of modern youth . . .
>
> > The new 'self' is born precisely on these ruins. He has broken the shell which forces him to be alienated, and he flexes his body in the wind which is devoid of the fragrance of flowers. He believes in the scars of his wounds, believes in his brain and nerves, believes in walking as a master of himself.

One could in fact trace a genealogy of self-discovery in the early works of these young poets: from gingerly efforts at self-portrait ("I have these two eyes/One side is darkness/On the other side light"; Mang Ke: "Self-Portrait"), to a humanistic declaration ("I am no hero/In an age without heroes/I just want to be a man"; Bei Dao: "Declaration"), to simple evocations of idealism and disillusionment ("Love and ideals/And I/The three of us are friends"; Liang Xiaobin: "Love and Ideals"; "Let me tell you, world/I—do—not—believe!"; Bei Dao: "The Answer"). By reworking these simple and transparent lines, sometimes a gifted poet like Bei Dao is able to con-

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struct a poem with more sustained power, such as the following (translated by Bonnie McDougall with my minor revisions):

Labor
Hands encircling the earth
. . .

Peace
In the land where the king is dead
that old rifle sprouts branches and new shoots
and becomes a cripple's cane

Motherland
Cast on a shield of bronze
she leans against a darkening museum wall

Life
A net

Orthodox critics of such poems object to the extreme brevity of the sections, and to the shreds of sentiment that weave a fabric of life as seen through the poet's subjective consciousness. And they complain of dark moods. Three lines from a poem by Gu Cheng have triggered a fierce reaction:

The junk with sails of mourning,
Slowly passes by,
And unfolds the dark-yellow cloth for corpses

Some older poets consider these lines a disgrace to the glory of the Yangtze River, which is a national symbol. As the senior poet Gong Liu remarks: "Who has ever heard Indians utter a libel against the Ganges, or Egyptians against the Nile? Even Americans compare the Mississippi to a motherly river."

Like most older or middle-aged poets, Gong Liu was silenced for twenty years as a rightist; but he was also probably spared the pain of witnessing corpses drifting down many rivers as the Red Guards battled each other during the early "armed struggle" phase of the Cultural Revolution in 1967–68. The imagery of mourning and death which pervades Gu Cheng's poem bespeaks a sentiment of condolence for the passage of a whole idealistic generation. If Gu in

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fact pins his poetic metaphor on the Yangtze River (it could be any river in China), he is not alone in seeing around him a darkened landscape. In fact, Chinese geographical names and famous historical sites are evoked frequently in the works of other poets: not only the Yangtze River and the Great Wall but also the Tianmen Square and the Temple of Heaven in Beijing, the ancient Tang dynasty pagoda in Xi'an, the martyrs' mound near Canton for the anti-Manchu revolutionaries of an earlier era. But the splendor and glory of a past China (typical of so many patriotic works) is gone; instead, these familiar sites are turned into metaphors of ruin and despair on which the poet searches for an uncertain hope. Three lines from a poem by Yang Lian sum up clearly this orientation:

> I come to these ruins
> Chasing after the only hope that once shone on me
> That untimely, fragile star

But are these poems "obscure," as conservative critics have argued? Rather, they spring, perhaps too transparently, from the texture of life and feeling which the young poets wish to make more "real" and authentic than the roseate socialist reality portrayed in countless works of revolutionary literature in the past. To be sure, this type of poetry has depicted a shattered reality which no longer conforms to Mao's ideological vision. (It also makes an interesting contrast to Mao's own evocations of northern Chinese landscape in his famous poem, "Snow," in which grandiose mountains and rivers bespeak the poet's supreme ambition to be a truly heroic leader unprecedented in Chinese history.) Thus despite raging counterattacks, a number of scholars and critics both inside China (Xie Mian, Xu Jingya, Sun Shaozhen) and abroad have professed sympathy for this "thinking generation"; some even proclaim that this surge of new poetry is already effecting a "revolution" in poetry writing and poetics: there has never been anything like it in the past thirty years.

In my view, both the praise and the blame tend to be extravagant. As novice innovators these young poets are still at a stage of "capturing instantaneous impressions" (in Bei Dao's words) and learning to realize the artistic capacities of poetry in order to do justice to the full range of their feelings and experiences. But as they begin their quest for larger questions and themes, their works may also become more mature. The poet Yang Lian has recently received

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much scholarly attention outside of China. Contrary to the examples given here, Yang experiments with longer forms in order perhaps to evolve a broader poetic vision.

In fiction, forms longer than the short story are also dominating current writing. The genre in vogue is the "medium-length fiction" (*Zhongpian xiaoshuo*), novelettes composed of anywhere between 20,000 and 80,000 Chinese characters, which often appear in several thick, large-sized literary magazines: *The Contemporary*, *October*, *Harvest*, and *Flower City* being the famous "big four" that enjoy nationwide circulation. A middle-ranged Chinese writer, seasoned after years of political hardship, gave me the following rationale for the popularity of lengthier fiction: the short story is a politically risky genre because its very limited length makes it difficult to camouflage its real message. Longer forms of fiction take longer to write: the author can thus seek a convenient excuse not to respond to immediate issues or the Party's campaign calls. On the other hand, younger novelists are more affirmative and ambitious: they wish to seize the artistic potential that the long novel affords, if only they can—as they told me so many times—transform their experience into art.

There has been much talk, both inside and outside of China, about the possible emergence of the "great novel": in view of China's recent past, there has been certainly no shortage of fictional material. The Cultural Revolution has been viewed by the Chinese as a "massive disaster" (*haojie*) which in the scale of human deaths and suffering, if not genocidal intent, may be comparable to the Jewish Holocaust. It will probably take many more years before the magnitude of such a national experience can be fully confronted in the collective memory of the Chinese themselves and expressed in creative writing. The few small steps the young poets have made toward personal remembrance lay the ground for better works to come—works which bear a certain imprint of combined humanism and modernism and which, because of this Chinese legacy of revolution and suffering, will inevitably depart in both style and spirit from European modernism of the early twentieth century.

As in the past, literature in China is still irretrievably locked in with politics and the Party. What distinguishes the post-Mao literary scene from before is that for the first time in thirty years the Party is ideologically on the defensive. As a result of its tacit de-Maoification, the present leadership is left with no clear-cut ideology of its own to counterpose to the literary dissidents. Mao, at least,

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had a definite ideological line. But what can the present Party leadership say about humanism other than that it lacks class content? The official clarion-calls for "four modernizations" could be—and in fact have been—used by the advocates of modernism as a pretext to rationalize their art and their demand for freedom of individual expression. Modernism in art and literature, so the argument goes, is the inevitable product of the cultural superstructure of a modernizing Chinese society. While this argument had been called into question during the height of the antispiritual pollution campaign in late 1983, the modernist trend shows no signs of decline, whereas its orthodox opponents—Deng Liqun in particular—are again in disfavor, if not in total disgrace. Some avid young advocates of modernism even go so far as to combine it with an added interest in futurism and technological society. The Party, in its earlier studied policy of relaxation, had unleashed a new "tiger" (to turn Mao's famous metaphor around) and now finds it hard to dismount, rein it in, or give it a specific direction.

Will China revert to a new Maoism in the future after Deng dies? Most of my Chinese friends who are established intellectuals assure me that this will never happen. I posed a similar question to the two young writers. Both of them agreed that after Deng's death there would very likely be new revolutionary chaos. (A story of political fantasy on China in the year 2001 appeared some time ago which gives precisely such a scenario—the return of Cultural Revolution radicalism right after the death of "an important Chinese leader.") If such a situation should arise, Mr. Yang answered that he would have no other recourse but to fight the new-Maoist forces of the left. Mr. Yin, on the other hand, considered my query rather irrelevant to his task at hand. As long as he can survive, his only mission in life, he said, is to attain a higher art and write good literature.

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POEMS

Charles Tomlinson

MACCHU PICCHU

All day, the weight of heat and then
Evening brings-in the thunder-heads:
A moving mountain leads their cavalcade
Of silent herds, decaying and re-forming,
And the mountain, too, toils, trails
Across the view of empty upper-sky
A whole high geography: foot-hills
Hollows, vales and forests follow
The world-in-making of this awakened height
That seeps up massively and darkly clear,
Through the more—or is it less—than human light,
Like an inkblot spread-out magnified:
Forest climbs with the piling crag:
The single bird that dips before it
Seems astray from there and flies to say
That Macchu Picchu has been dispossessed
Even of its houses, its stone shells'
Pure prospect of a dwelling place
And the storm that is rising will efface the rest.

Andrew Harvey

NO DIAMONDS, NO HAT, NO HONEY

I.

"Where shall I hide from Lydia," I cry,
"Not even Leviathan has a belly

Large and sea-sunken enough . . .
On the tallest tower of Babylon

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She would find me out, my
King Kong with one piercing green eye . . .

Find me out and have me, and not in the Biblical
Sense either, but worse, far worse."

I fall to my knees and say,
"I will be good to you!"

She laughs, "You were never good in your life
Which has been blissfully devoted

To not being good or true to your friends.
It is this quality we love in you."

One of her deadliest speeches . . .
How "blissfully" spits from her!

So I shall not even hide in virtue.
So I shall not even cover my nakedness

In the twigs of charity that cover other men.
Was anyone more miserable?

"Yes," says Lydia, "many."
"Many," she repeats; I shrink. "Many, many . . ."

I'm an ant now on one of her gloves. With one
Imperial gesture, she drops

But does not kill me. Even on the floor
I am conspicuous as crystal.

II.

"The dream I had last night! It moved me so!
You and I were both silent,

Walking silently through snow
Snow was falling silent, slow . . ."

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"The rhymes," Lydia says "they're sending me to sleep!
Is that what they are meant to do?"

"My dream, my visionary dream. . . .
Don't you want to know

What you were doing, how the sky
Went purple and gold around us, how, at one moment, a deer . . ."

"A deer? Don't tell me, 'with huge and shining eyes'?"
"Yes," I said. "Yes," she said, "and the deer TALKED, didn't it?"

I said nothing. What could I say?
"Really, a deer with 'huge shining eyes'

Talking in the snow at us . . .
Was there a crucifix between its antlers

Or did it just sermonise like Balaam's ass?
Ha, ha," she goes mirthlessly, "Ha, ha.

I don't dig revelations,
They tend to veer toward the banal I find."

"Yes," I said, "it talked beautifully. It talked Latin."

"Naturally," Lydia said.
"The Agnus Dei," I said. "Naturally,

What else would a deer be saying?"
"And you, Lydia, were kneeling in the snow by it, praying

And weeping."
"In your dreams, Fernando,

I am always praying and weeping."

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III.

"All afternoon my tears fell for Scott of the Antarctic.
All men have their secrets; this is one of mine.

For Scott the man, and those last words of his
Written in the final wind

'I do not regret this last journey; we took risks, we knew
We took them . . .'" I can't go on. Already, Lydia is pacing

With that stare that foretells
A doom less kind than death. "Go on," she smiles, "let the tears

Fall to the end . . ." My eyes swim, I stagger, I say,
"'Things have come out against us; therefore, we have

No cause for complaint.'" Lydia laughs. I am angry.
"Who could say any more? This is nobility!

This is the courage that rails against nothing,
Accepting in the soul's Latin what has been given."

Lydia is deathly tonight, the moonlight lies along
Her arms like ice . . . "Oh," she mocks,

"How men adore the classic types." Then, "I like the phrase,
'In the soul's Latin'." Then, "He had to say something.

Didn't he, out in the waste like that,
Stripped of everything but the hope

Of some poor idiot's tears . . ." She is tired suddenly.
She sits down. "When will men understand, Fernando,

Nothing they say does not cheapen them—
Including what I have just said?"

Her eyes were so sad I was frightened.

"Clear these poems of all these words," I hear her say.
"Let the snow that is falling cover us and them,

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Let the night that is falling cover the snow also."
"What then?" She smiles, "How should I know?

'I do not regret this last journey; we took risks . . .'"

Eugenio Montale

NEWS FROM AMIATA

The bad weather's fireworks
will be a murmur of beehives late tonight.
Worms have gnawed the room's
rafters, and a smell of melons
pushes up from the floorboards. The soft
puffs of smoke that climb a valley
of elves and mushroom up to the peak's transparent
cone cloud my windowpanes,
and yet I write you from this place, this faraway
table, from the honeycomb cell
of a globe launched into space—
and the covered cages, the hearth
where chestnuts explode, the veins
of saltpeter and mould are the frame through which
you'll soon break. The life
that fables you is still too brief
if it contains you! Your ikon discloses
the luminous background. Outside, it's raining.

Editor's Note: "News from Amiata" is translated from the Italian by William Arrowsmith. The Italian text is from *Selected Poems* by Eugenio Montale. Copyright © 1948, 1949, 1957 by Anoldo Mondadori Editore, printed by permission of New Directions Publishing Corporation.

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And were you to follow the fragile architectures
blackened by time and soot,
the courtyards at whose center stands
the deepest well; were you to follow
the shrouded flight of the nocturnal
birds and, at the bottom of the ravine the flickering light
of the galaxy, the swaddling bands of every anguish . . .
But the footstep that echoes so long in the darkness
is that of the solitary walker who sees nothing
but this falling of arches, shadows, folds.
The stars are much too subtly woven,
the belltower's eye is stopped at two,
even the climbing creepers are a mounting
of shadows, their fragrance a bitterness that hurts.
Come back, north wind, come colder tomorrow,
break the sandstone's ancient hands,
scatter the books of hours in the attic,
and let all be a quiet lens, dominion, a prison cell
of sense that doesn't despair! Come back stronger,
wind from the north, winds that make us love
our chains and seal the spores of the possible!
Too narrow the alleys, the file of black asses
whose clattering heels strike sparks;
from the unseen peak magnesium flashes reply.
Oh the trickling that cautiously drips down
from the dark huts, time turned to water,
the long colloquy with the wretched dead, ashes, wind,
wind that holds back, death, the death that lives!

This Christian wrangle which has nothing
but words of shadow and sorrow—
what of me does it bring to you? Less
than the marsh, softly silting
behind its dam of cement, has stolen from you.
A mill-wheel, the trunk of a tree,
the world's last frontiers. A tangled pile

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of straw is nudged open: emerging, at night,
to bind my vigil with that deep sleep of yours
that takes them in, the porcupines
slake their thirst at a trickle of pity.

Mary Oliver

SUNRISE

You can
die for it—
an idea,
or the world; people

have done so,
brilliantly,
letting
their small bodies be bound

to the stake,
creating
an unforgettable
fury of light; but

this morning,
climbing the familiar hills
in the familiar
fabric of dawn, I thought

of China
and India
and Europe, and I thought
how the sun

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blazes
for everyone just
so joyfully
as it rises

under the lashes
of my own eyes, and I thought
I am so many!
What is my name?

What is the name
of the deep breath I would take
over and over
for all of us? Call it

whatever you want, it is
happiness, it is another one
of the ways to enter
fire.

Frank J. Nisetich

THE RECIDIVIST

La religion est donc une réaction défensive de la nature contre le pouvoir dissolvant de l'intelligence.
Bergson

1

Odd voices sounding now,
voices I had thought were through
reverberating in my brain—
insistent pulses, like the rain,
a troubling rain because I know
the basement's in an undertow,

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the pump can scarcely pump it out
and when it's out it isn't out
but circles back and gurgles in.
The whole process starts again.
The old fanatic goes berserk.
I get no respite in my work.
Magnus es, domine!
I have to let him have his say.

2

The second person might avail
to rouse him down there in his well,
summon the genie from the pit
but I'm not ready for that yet.
I'm still in shape, it still makes sense
to ratify the drift, dispense
with formulae that others feed
the full-grown babes that bawl with need
inside themselves. The one in there
may starve to death for all I care.

3

But why keep to these restraints?
Not every random pigment taints
or spoils the canvas of a thought
well-framed, spontaneous, untaught.
But are there such? The bars in front
cast just the shadows that I want.
If I get out, my desperate look
will be mistaken. Under lock
and key it keeps its meaning plain.
Open the door, and what is gone?
Only the certainty we feel
seeing the prisoner in his jail.
I'll stay behind and hold the key.
That's my way of being free.

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4

He waits inside the caverned bear,
among the salmon, in the hare.
The falcon knows him, and the shark.
He even tunnels through the dark
burrowing into mouldy ground
to plow a night where sight and sound
are unconceived and inconceivable.
No life is unretrievable
to him, who drums the earth with hooves
or makes cicadas fill the groves
throbbing in time to his ascent.
The forest is his instrument.
Dying in the panther's claws
to yawn again in his own jaws,
lord of animals, if you're there,
save your children from despair!

5

Have I abandoned my intent,
invoked the very one I meant
to shun, determined not to call
before my back's against the wall,
who'll sniff me out, the famous hound
(but spelled the other way around)
who has a nostril for decay,
who'll catch my drift before I say
what's on my mind, and reappear?
No doubt he's lurking somewhere near.

6

Come hunting in the vibrant grass.
Herds are grazing, beasts en masse.
The burning sun of Africa
still dispenses the old thrills,
the big-time theatricals
and we can still afford to pay
for there's a balance in the blanching bone,
that nothing lives or dies alone.

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The Mycenaean artist knew
only by hearsay what he drew
but see how much he understood.
He has the lion crush the deer
while others flee and one, in fear
(or maybe it feels gratitude)
looks back and sees what makes the hunter pause.
Confusing the effect and cause,

we make the kill that halts the chase
contain the germ of sacrifice.
The herd can graze now, less alert.
The chosen one that's weak or flawed
intercedes for them with god
reluctantly, and yet the hurt
is over by the time the others gain
safety on the swarming plain.

7

In a million years the habit forms
grim, but not without its charms,
fascinations that adhere
to clotted bowl or dripping spear
and pleasure deeper than mere lust
(though kin to it, as mud to dust)
sees Antigone go down
sub tectum eius, bride of stone,
or watches Christ ascend the hill
reiterating "Not my will
but thine be done"—and yet we say
he wouldn't have it another way.

8

If we could talk a moment here,
only a moment, free of fear
that you're an echo, I the source . . .
but that's the essence of the curse.

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9

I put such faith in mind, the faith
that intellect could quell mere blood.
The muddled cravings of the crowd
have made a comeback, then, though death
lurks somewhere round the corner still
and I've my brains intact, and will.

Or is it mere expectancy,
the old quick beat of blatant hope
that makes decline a looking up
and will that's fettered feel it's free?
I'd stop it, if I weren't sure
something far worse is at the door.

The miracle has come to pass.
Mountains moved while in the wings
strange eloquent imaginings
made all my speech a bell of brass.
I know for certain, now it's done,
necessity and love are one.

10

Here is a peak in my spare time.
I see my father in his prime.
What came to him has lately come
to me as well: delirium,
the dove descending at my bath.
I took the haunted desert path.
Temptation kept me on my toes.
I liked the view, and so it goes.
"Objective" was the word he loved
and yet he got himself involved,
filled the house with human life—
and now I have a pregnant wife.
Scouring the past in search of names
there are some things that we would change
but as for Eden, let it keep
to the old pages, sound asleep.

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We feel it thrashing in the womb,
already reaching for more room.
Disappointed, son of man?
Now there's a feeling that began,
long before your strained debut,
to play its part defining you.

David Weiss

VAL-DE-GRÂCE

And all my sour-sweet days
I will lament and love
George Herbert

Where could I find you if not here?
Among faces chipped or worn away
I have looked everywhere for a likeness
that might mend a cleft tongue, a broken wheel.

> Such a little is enough for one.
> For two: little short of living stone
> and a staircase spiralling down.

If already you've kissed me in a drop of rain
or, as I drew near, turned from me,
I cannot tell. Shadows of too many columns
obscure what has become of me, of you.

> Corrugated tin caps the gilded dome.
> The iron gates of Val-de-Grâce swing open
> to close to open again.

Louis as a boy laid the first stone.
Later, soldiers lay in rows, infected, maimed.
Are the rights of man still much the same?
Stop jabbering, *speak plainly*, I can hear

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you say. I don't know even your real name
or why I am pleading like this,
but OK—

What I want is a home you'll visit often, even
in my absence, like rain through rotted roofbeams.
In the hallway of painful ends, we will cry out for
and curse one another assured of some further descent.

That's my offer. Take it or let me alone:
a love which passeth understanding,
we can gnaw each other to the bone.

I'll be at the fountain off Rue Val-de-Grâce.
A footpath of sky through the chestnut trees
will lead you to me, to them—four maidens drenched
to the skin who buckle each night shouldering

the world. You can hear them praying, *let it be*
done. Yet in the morning, somehow,
they've raised it back up again.

David St. John

AN ESSAY ON LIBERATION

He stood naked at one of the two windows
She kept open in all weathers in her
Corner room at the back of the old building
As the sun rose he watched a man
Dragging a handcart along the narrow alley below
& across the court a young boy was turning
His face from side to side in a freckled mirror
From the temples in the old section of the city
He could hear the first sequence
Of morning prayers & to the west he could see

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The dulled bronze domes of The Church of the Orthodox
Where at any moment the bells would begin to chime
& in the streets crisscrossing the city
From the old section to the sea
The tanks & personnel trucks began moving quietly
Into position in their orderly & routine way
& as the bells began sounding from their tower
They were answered by the echoing concussion of mortars
As the daily shelling of the hills began
& she was slicing small pieces of bread the size of coins
To fry in goat butter & chives she was naked
Kneeling on one of the worn rugs thrown at angles across
The scarred floor she glanced up at him & smiled
Nodding for no reason in particular & in spite of
The fact the one phrase he'd taught her perfectly
Began with the word for *free* though it ended
With *nothing*

Michael Goodman

PISGAH

(for Rob)

Who would have thought
the days would gather like seawater,

evaporating, yielding their salt,
or that the heart,

which was a mighty sparrow,
would bend to its labor?

But what a strange city the future is.
I saw it one evening with my brother in 1967.
We'd been out on the tide flats
digging lugworms, turning over spadefuls
of cold sludge, picking out rocks,

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broken glass, crushed mollusks.
Near dusk, just when the swale darkened
and the lights on the Throgs Neck Bridge clicked on,
the great, hewn diamond of Manhattan
rose above the Sound.

Its light made the crickets woozy.
Their voices unravelled like a spool of white thread
over miles of water, and we joined them,
blending our own shrill voices,
describing the future to each other
with such precision, such blind devotion
as would later serve memory

the jobs we'd wake to
the size and color of our houses
how beautiful our wives are

But what a strange city the future is
with its bodiless spires.
Our souls moved out like gulls toward it
whose eyes were the tiny beads of ink
which hold everything—the day rising,
smoke pouring out of chimneys,
the tireless water gnashing its slate teeth.

Laurence Lieberman

SLAVE PLATOONS GOUGING THE CAPITOL

Our van glides
up a cobblestone road—
particolored, the mild grade
deadended in a paved bubble: this cul-de-sac opens
into a steep flight of stairs,

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66 white tall steps of *The Queen's Staircase* agleam,
rising to the crag,
where hills of solid rock house
the Capitol . . .

Far right, looms
the Governor's Mansion, hewn
out of stone cliffs by slave hundreds
in chain gangs, who wielded their one tool, the *driell.*
A chopper. A rock-hacking scythe.
The axelike curved blades, two-edged, flung to either side
of the wooden shafts
like jaws of a hammerhead shark, flash
in the midday

sun. . . . *We see,*
again: hundreds of menials
linked by metal leg cuffs, thick anklets,
strung out in long teams, so little space between toilers
their swings nearly graze the bare calves
of the next in line; but the rhythm of hillside progress—
a tromp and trudge
in lockstep paced by the tom-toms—is
a precision dance:

no missteps,
no slips of the swung blades,
as the workforce wends its clockwise
course over Government Hill's rocky face. . . . We conjure,
today, the grim morning platoons,
some eight or nine rows at once, one rotating tier of hoop-
backed rock crushers
stationed over the other, so many
ant colony

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lineups circling
conic earth mounds. The pattern
of travail—ceaseless, unfluctuant—
commences in first light, or predawn glimmers: bobbing heads,
sharp elbows, bony half-clad hips
fading in mists, fog pockets. . . . Now smoke trails white out
three black figures
(typewriter errors painted over
with *liquid*

paper), the next
two men in line perfectly intact;
on the terrace below, a lean headless
torso leads a legless muscly physique, the missing parts
of some figures matching up with
amputations of near, or distant, tier mates. The witness's
eye assembles
far-flung body quarters, stray limbs,
into composite

wholes: anatomies
glimpsed through slow-thinning smoke
puffs, rising ground fogs. . . . If one trips
and falls from the ledge, the whole row may follow, dragged
down the hill face: one chain-rank,
collapsing on another, could trigger an all-but-unstoppable
roller flux . . .
Free-falling bodies . . . An avalanche
of mortals. . . .

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Barbara Rose

LIFE ON THE PROJECT

Both Lee Krasner and Jackson Pollock joined the Federal Art Project in 1935, the year it was initiated. Neither had any difficulty in proving the financial need required to be hired by the W.P.A. At the point that both Jackson and his brother Sanford went to work in the easel division, they were literally starving, stealing food off pushcarts to survive. Pollock painted a scene of men huddled around a fire in Union Square which was exhibited at the John Reed Club. It expressed the kind of desperation he himself felt at this point.

Since financial need, not sex, religion, or color, was the determining criterion for employment on the W.P.A., minorities and women for the first time were given equal opportunity as artists in America. While Pollock's teacher, Thomas Hart Benton, painted happy "darkies" cavorting in the fields, talented black artists like Norman Lewis were given the chance to work alongside white artists like Ad Reinhardt (the two became friends on the Project). While women, if they appeared at all in Benton's man's world, were seen as sexy nymphs, Lee Krasner was at work down on the East Side piers, directing a crew of men. At work, she wore paint-stained jeans, neatly rolled to the knees, and heavy sweaters because the pier, heated by a single coal stove, was bitterly cold.

Lee Krasner's first job on the Project was to help a City College professor execute complicated marine drawings. Soon, however, she and her poet friend Harold Rosenberg were assigned to the mural division as assistants to Max Spivak, who specialized in painting clowns for children's hospitals. As Rosenberg later pointed out, the democratic principle in art meant that no distinctions of quality or significance were made. "It didn't matter," he reminisced, "if you were a portrait painter or you painted bears in a shooting gallery on Coney Island."

Editor's Note: This article is an excerpt from a forthcoming biography of Lee Krasner and Jackson Pollock. The subject is the experience of avant-garde American artists hired by the W.P.A. Federal Art Project, one of the New Deal relief programs established to put the unemployed to work during the Depression. All quotations are based on interviews conducted by the author.

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They had to report every morning to Spivak's studio on Ninth Street. Since Spivak would never let them near his mural, Krasner and Rosenberg, both talkative, opinionated, and argumentative, had plenty of time to discuss their favorite subjects, poetry and politics. They disagreed about nearly everything and maintained this friendly animosity long after the Pollocks and the Rosenbergs found themselves neighbors in Springs, East Hampton, Long Island. By that time, of course, Rosenberg had become a famous art critic, the champion of Willem de Kooning, whom he and Krasner both met while working on the Project.

During the years she worked on the Project, gradually rising from assistant to mural project supervisor, Krasner continued to study. Always involved with self-improvement, she had studied life drawing briefly with George Bridgman at the Art Students League during the summer of 1934. She also studied with Job Goodman at Greenwich House for a semester in 1935. Goodman was a Benton student and a friend of Pollock's. In fact, he and Pollock collaborated on several projects, including a mural for the Grover Cleveland High School which was never executed and some experimental sculpture made of clay and wax.

In the early thirties, when they might have met at Greenwich House, Lee and Jackson had only odd hours for their art. Both were having trouble making ends meet. Lee had a teaching degree, but she could not stand the idea of an academic life and preferred to take odd jobs that left her freer. Jackson had no degrees and at that point almost no skills. Unable to find any kind of job, he went on federal relief in 1934. In 1935, he worked as a stonecutter for the New York State Emergency Relief Bureau. His job was to restore and clean Saint-Gaudens's statue of Peter Cooper in Cooper Square. It was a time when his thoughts were still focused on sculpture, and he might well have preferred working as a sculptor. However, the technical levels were higher for sculpture than for painting. Thus, when Pollock applied for a W.P.A. job, the supervisor who decided to which division an artist would be assigned put Jackson on the easel painting project—thereby making it virtually impossible for Pollock to pursue his two genuine interests—sculpture and mural painting. Pollock's brother, Sanford McCoy, on the other hand, was hired as a mural painter, possibly because he had actually worked on murals in Los Angeles with the Mexican muralist David Siqueiros. Like Sanford, Lee was also assigned to mural painting. This was ironic, since it was Jackson who aspired to public art, whereas Lee was still think-

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ing exclusively in terms of the easel picture. However, the Project, not her education, ultimately prepared her to paint big pictures in later life.

Lee Krasner recalls the somewhat arbitrary means the government used to locate indigent artists. One day, she was sketching from the model in Job Goodman's class at Greenwich House, and a man came in and asked if anyone in the class would like a job as an artist. Her hand shot up. The inspector looked at her work and noted her name. Several weeks later, she received a form letter setting up an appointment for an interview. The purpose of the interview was to ascertain that the applicant had no money or potential means of support. She passed with flying colors. On the basis of the recommendation of the official who had visited Goodman's class, she was assigned to the mural rather than the easel or teaching divisions of the Project.

On the Project, Jackson, Lee, and their contemporaries could slowly perfect the complex personal styles that found buyers only afterwards and, in many ways, as a result of the sensational publicity surrounding Pollock's death. Certainly there was no hope that any of these artists could sell the kind of work they were doing in the thirties. There was no place to show. The galleries would not have them, nor for that matter would the museums. For Pollock himself, the mid-thirties was a period of growing crisis. Even on the Project, he tended to remain isolated. His contacts were either boyhood friends like Philip Guston and sculptor Reuben Kadish, ex-Benton students, or his brothers. Their heroes were the Mexican mural painters and the artists of the Renaissance.

Lee Krasner, on the other hand, already knew her old friends Ilya Bolotowsky and Giorgio Cavallon, who were also on the Project, from the National Academy. Like her, they were already abstract painters and belonged to the small inner circle of Americans who were among the first artists in the world to recognize the genius of Mondrian. She quickly met the small band of modernists, including Arshile Gorky and Willem de Kooning, whose mentor was John Graham. They had in common an interest in the school of Paris. Inhabiting two entirely different social spheres, it was unlikely that Krasner and Pollock would become friends. Only a common art interest could unite either of them with another person in a deep bond. For them to have anything to say to each other, Pollock's focus would have to change, bringing him closer to Krasner's friends, the group for whom, as Krasner puts it, "Picasso was God."

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Ironically, the Depression turned out to be the greatest thing to happen to American artists. They were, for the most part, better off during the Depression than before or after. "It was a kind of mass scholarship," Ilya Bolotowsky recalled. For the first time, they were paid a living wage ($23.86 a week was standard) and treated with new respect as legitimate workers. The main objective of the "Project," as the artists familiar with it termed the W.P.A./F.A.P., was ostensibly to preserve skills. The result, however, was that many artists, who in the past had been able to find only menial jobs which took up all their time, acquired new skills. Miraculously, the government did not require Pollock to work as a janitor or Krasner to waitress—the kinds of jobs they had actually held—but put them to work as artists. In order to come to artistic maturity, they both required the opportunity to evolve and to interact with other artists.

Emulating the Mexicans, Benton had already identified mural painting as the form of public art destined to replace the portable easel picture, whose rise was identical with that of the middle class. Benton's polemic in favor of mural art had in fact set the stage for the eventual government patronage of wall painting. The movement to replace easel painting and its pictorial conventions with wall paintings was launched by Benton and art critic Thomas Craven. These murals, like the great fresco cycles of the Renaissance, were supposed to be collective expressions for the edification of the general public. In his popular book, *Modern Art*, first published in 1934, Craven, the leading and certainly the loudest critical voice of the moment in America, identified Benton as one of the four saviors "who first repudiated the philosophy of Modernism." This vile invention Craven defined as "a French method which, under the dominion of Matisse, Picasso, Brancusi and their idolaters, separated art from the living world." Besides Benton, the other three great antimodernists, according to Craven, were German expressionist George Grosz and Mexican muralists Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco. All were rapidly gaining reputations in North America. The Depression had awakened a new social conscience, and an art of political and moral content was more appreciated than the formal or decorative art of the school of Paris.

Following the example of the Mexicans, Thomas Hart Benton became a muralist and a history painter. Benton, however, was not Marxist, although politics played a large role in his life. Like his friend Craven, he was an ardent populist. For both, this meant espousing the cause of democracy in art as opposed to the "elitism" of

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the French avant-garde. They believed in representational art that the man in the street could appreciate and rejected the modern idea of an initiated "happy few." Benton's insistence that art was a political statement impressed Pollock, which made it more difficult for him to make the transition to a more private and subjective art. The means by which he made this transition was through the art that had inspired Benton—that of the Mexican muralists. Their images, although representational, were not naturalistic or even for that matter realistic.

Before it arrived in the United States, the idea of modern wall painting had to travel from Paris to Mexico. There the new revolutionary government began a program of public art patronage in 1922. In their ambitious fresco cycles, Rivera, Orozco, Siqueiros and others replaced the neo-Platonic geometry of Mondrian and the modern graphic style of Léger with images illustrating the history of Mexico and celebrating the culture and religion of its Indian population. They based their art not on Cubism but on Renaissance prototypes. Their iconography was pointedly both ethnic and Marxist. Its objects were clearly as much moral as, if not more than, aesthetic. They believed in art as propaganda.

Although its stated purpose was not such, the W.P.A. Art Project was also basically a propaganda vehicle for the New Deal. There were no official directives regarding subject matter. However, not surprisingly, the iconography of the W.P.A. murals was frequently that of the New Deal itself: the work of building and rebuilding America. The murals celebrated the labor of the worker on the farm and in the factory. Their iconography was, unlike that of the Mexican muralists who portrayed fat, greedy capitalists, rarely critical or satiric, but instead optimistic and supportive of working people generally. Criticism and satire were left to political cartoonists. Rarely did they appear in easel paintings and never, as far as one can ascertain, did a critical dimension find its way into murals, which were subject to greater control because they were public art works.

Painting people at work, the artist identified with the public at large. The artist's job, creating art for the people, seemed necessary and dignified. That one could live from one's art gave it a new status in the eyes of the artist as well as in the eyes of fellow Americans, most of whom came into contact with art for the first time as a result of the W.P.A. educational programs. The principal subject matter of the murals was the optimistic theme of man's progress through the

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ages, which presumably culminated in the new welfare state Roosevelt was in the process of founding in the United States.

The W.P.A. murals substituted secular history lessons for the religious lessons taught by mural painting in the past. Narrative panels communicated the uplifting message. The various arts and sciences were depicted as a progressive evolution documenting a steady improvement in living standards. The ever upward and onward march of civilization, culminating in the soon-to-be-realized dream of liberty, equality, and fraternity of democratic American civilization, with its promise of emancipation and social justice, not to mention social security, was the implicit if not the explicit theme of these murals. Progress in transportation and communication, medical science, and industrial machinery, providing the possibility of a better life for all, were the frequent subjects of New Deal murals.

Judged purely from the standpoint of art, these murals often lacked aesthetic quality and reminded one of the mediocrity of contemporary socialist realist styles in the Soviet Union, Germany, and Italy. Often they were closer to illustration and cartooning than they were to the monumental art of the Renaissance masters, on which they were presumably based. One of the exceptions was Lee Krasner's gigantic epic mural painting of the history of navigation. Working in an empty pier with her crew of assistants, she directed the execution of this portable mural destined for the Children's Library in Brownsville, Brooklyn, New York. The dimensions and subject had been assigned: the propagandistic theme was the progression from sailboat to steamboat to freighter to seaplane.

One cannot really understand the subject matter and content of W.P.A. murals except in the context of Marxist thought, which sought to replace religion and myth—the value systems of pre-industrial civilizations—with history as an imperative. As subject matter, history painting in the age of mass communications had the drawback of topicality and provincial interest. When the New York school turned its back on Marxism, its rejection of history as subject required the definition of a new content for art: it was inconceivable for a generation of artists shaped by the belief that decorative easel painting was the equivalent of the vacuity of bourgeois culture to pursue a purely formal art, purged of subject matter or content.

Serious discussion of the content and subject matter of abstract expressionism is only now beginning. It should be remembered that the roots of the New York school lie buried in the thirties, inextricably entwined with Marxist politics and aesthetics. The conversion of

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Marxist objective content into subjective psychological content anchored in religious myth rather than in materialist history is the critical turning point of the New York school; it coincides precisely with the collapse of the American left after the Munich pact.

During the Depression, discussions of content were frequent. The mural painter's task was described by James Michael Newall, who painted a giant fresco entitled *Evolution of Western Civilization*:

> Mural painting, most often placed in public buildings, is seen by a great many passing people, who represent a variety of ideas and are engaged in different callings. It is therefore by nature not intimate, but general or universal in thought and appeal. Through its monumental approach it goes beyond the recording of outward appearance to include also the inner significance of the society and time in which it is painted.

Newall further exhorted the artist to find a "universal language in order that his works may be easily read. Toward this end the artist invents symbols—a shorthand or phonetic language—through which to convey his thought." Newall's conception of a symbol was as literal as a high school textbook (his mural is still *in situ* in the library of the Evandon Childs High School in the Bronx).

Looking back at the period that she found both exciting and frustrating, Krasner recalls the W.P.A. system:

> An artist got a mural. Then he would have anywhere from two to ten assistants, depending on the size of the mural and how many assistants he needed—or she needed. The Project lasted a long time. Some of the artists whose sketches had been approved left the Project. The actual mural was executed by others. De Kooning, for example, had to leave the Project when it was discovered that he was not yet a U.S. citizen. I executed the actual mural from his sketch.

During the years he worked on the Project, Pollock continued his technical experiments. Crafts were an important part of the W.P.A. program. Native American Indians were hired to produce pottery and jewelry in traditional tribal styles. Indeed, it is largely as a result of the W.P.A. that their culture, which Pollock so much admired, was preserved and documented. Within Pollock's oeuvre, there are a number of craft works. Benton encouraged him to make pottery because Benton's wife, Rita, could sell it for him more easily.

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In the winter of 1934–1935, Pollock made his first ceramics. Benton himself had painted on porcelain, and he taught Pollock the technique. In these painted china bowls, we can see Pollock's growing fascination with the Mexican muralists. The design of these circular bowls, plates, and plaques always followed the contours of the circle, creating patterns that suggested the whorling imagery of Pollock's later paintings.

Medieval crafts like stained glass and mosaics were also revived on the Project. The art of the Middle Ages was admired for its collective spirit. The dream of a society that was integrated and whole, producing a public art that was not fragmented or alienated, inspired these enterprises. Although Krasner, not Pollock, later actually would execute a large-scale architectural mosaic in 1958, Pollock submitted a mosaic to the Project. Like virtually everything else he did, it was rejected. In fact, during the eight years he was employed by the W.P.A., Pollock executed roughly fifty paintings, of which only two were placed on view. Others he gave to friends, bartered, or abandoned. Since his death, a number of these early works have begun to surface, changing our conception of Pollock's intentions and development. Around 1940, both Krasner and Pollock were thinking about mosaics. At this time, Pollock actually made a mosaic in the traditional style of imbedding pieces of colored glass in cement. Both studied crafts at Greenwich House and were involved with its activities. Greenwich House, near Sheridan Square, was the local Village music and art center. Pollock worked as a janitor there also. (Pollock's only extant mural sketch was a design for a mural for Greenwich House, a gouache on cheap, brown paper that he gave his brother, Charles.) Nevertheless, the two did not meet. They may have passed each other in the halls of Greenwich House, but their common contact, Job Goodman, Lee's teacher and Jackson's collaborator, never introduced them.

Greenwich Village in the thirties was still literally a village, a small town with an autonomous bohemian culture, the closest thing to European intellectual life America could offer. There were dark Italian coffeehouses on MacDougal Street. They were indoors rather than on the sidewalk like Parisian cafes, but you could hang out there all day, nurse an espresso and talk about the latest news from Paris—still the center of modern art and literature. At the Provincetown Playhouse up the street you could see Eugene O'Neill's plays. In the shops on Eighth Street, you could buy the latest books and records. The bars around Sheridan Square played New Orleans jazz

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and bebop. You spent an evening buying just one drink. Washington Square Park, the northern limit of the Village, had park benches that cost nothing to occupy, and you could sit for hours arguing about socialism versus communism, abstract art versus representational art, popular versus elite styles.

East of the park was New York University, where the wealthy Cubist painter A. E. Gallatin had opened the Gallery of Living Art, which included paintings by the leaders of the school of Paris. Admission was free, as it was at the Whitney Museum, located a block west of the park on Eighth Street. Then, as now, Eighth Street was the hub of the Village. In the thirties and forties, however, it was the center of a genuinely experimental and genuinely impoverished low-rent bohemia that preferred poverty to bourgeois conformity. Drunks and bums brushed shoulders with daring dilettantes like Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, who designed gigantic sculptures in her MacDougal Alley studio. Poet E. E. Cummings lived in a tiny Village mews house on Patchin Place, and Arshile Gorky had a studio just north of the park on Sullivan Street, until he moved to Union Square. When German painter Hans Hofmann decided to start an art school in America in 1933, it was logical he should choose a location close to Washington Square where artists congregated. It was equally logical that when David Siqueiros opened an experimental art workshop in 1935, he should choose Union Square six blocks north and several blocks east of the Hofmann school. Union Square was the heart of left-wing politics where soapbox orators held forth and political demonstrations were often organized.

Washington Square, although it had changed considerably since the days of Henry James, was still ringed by elegant townhouses. It was the place to talk art, just as Union Square, the green island in a rough, proletarian neighborhood, was the place to talk politics. In the area between the two public parks lived a large part of the emergent American avant-garde, including Lee Krasner, who had a studio on East Ninth Street, a block from Pollock's apartment-studio on East Eighth Street. Throughout the forties, after Jackson and Lee left the Village and moved to the country, the area between Union Square and Washington Square, which gradually spread toward the cheap rent sections of the Bowery and the Lower East Side, as the West Village was taken over by tourists and boutiques, was the American equivalent of the Left Bank. To hear those who nostalgically recall the Village in its bohemian heyday tell about it, there was an excitement in risk-taking, a camaraderie in poverty and

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opposition to middle-class and academic convention, a heady joy in the loft parties sponsored by the Artists Union that SoHo has never known. That SoHo was the invention of art dealers perhaps explains its immediate commercialization. In any event, SoHo never belonged to artists the way the Village did.

Today, there is no "Latin Quarter," no bohemia and no avant-garde. This suggests that avant-garde culture may be a ghetto phenomenon dependent on the geographical proximity of artists to one another and the exclusion of the general public from its precincts and concerns. For a few memorable decades, Greenwich Village was such a place. Virtually everybody who was anybody in the arts lived there. Critic Clement Greenberg had an apartment on Bank Street, architect Frederick Kiesler occupied a small penthouse on lower Seventh Avenue, and Meyer Shapiro, the art historian who daringly supported new art, lived on Fourth Street in the West Village. A few doors from Pollock's studio, Dorothy Miller, the influential Museum of Modern Art curator, lived with her husband, Holger (Eddie) Cahill. A sometime painter from a socially prominent family, Cahill was called to Washington by Roosevelt to structure the Federal Art Project.

Cahill was an ardent supporter of the mural painting movement, and he emphasized the decoration of public buildings with wall paintings. It was probably the advanced taste of Cahill, through his connections to the Museum of Modern Art, that made it possible for the New York City section of the W.P.A. to hire abstract artists and permit them to go on working in abstract styles. That Mondrian's principal American disciple, neoplastic painter Burgoyne Diller, was named supervisor of the easel division was a fact no less remarkable than Lenin appointing Kandinsky as the first Soviet Commissioner of Art Education.

Throughout the thirties, Diller was the patron saint of the abstract artists on the Project; he managed to commission a number of abstract mural paintings to decorate radio station WNYC and the social rooms of the Federal Housing Project in Williamsburgh in Brooklyn. These murals were executed and photographed. Although the photographs exist in the National Archives, the actual murals have been painted over. The historical irony is that the abstract artists, including Stuart Davis, his pupil Francis Criss, and Criss's student Ad Reinhardt, as well as European-born abstractionists like Ilya Bolotowsky, Paul Kelpe, Jean Xceron, and Carl Holty, familiar with the Bauhaus and constructivism, essentially wanted to paint

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murals. However, the mural division supervisors and the bureaucrats who headed the schools, hospitals, post offices, libraries, and other municipal buildings waiting to be decorated, wanted nothing to do with abstract art. Through a series of adroit bureaucratic maneuvers, Diller was not only able to continue protecting the artists working under him in the easel division in abstract and quasi-abstract styles, he was also able to gain control of a few architectural commissions, which he filled with the first abstract murals ever painted.

The critical and aesthetic judgments on the W.P.A. were made by bureaucrats and were essentially a function of political power. As the Communist Party gained strength in the Project bureaucracy, the possibilities of abstract murals diminished, since the Party held to the strict Stalinist line that the purpose of art was to instruct the masses, confirming their sense of class consciousness and identification with the proletariat. In Russia, the constructivist avant-garde, one of the most progressive and innovative groups in modern art, was destroyed by Stalinism. The survival of the American avant-garde on the Project was a small miracle accomplished largely through the protection of Cahill and Diller, as well as their own stubborn tenacity.

Cubist painters Ilya Bolotowsky and John Graham, who had witnessed the cultural oppression of the Bolsheviks firsthand, were always ready to warn their colleagues against the dangers of Stalinism. Graham claimed that he had been an officer in the Czar's cavalry run out of Russia by the Red Army. His stories about his life and love life were almost as elaborate as his theories about art and politics. If he was clear about one thing, however, it was his anti-Stalinism and anti-Bolshevism, which he passed on to his American disciples, along with a curious brand of mystical anarchism that made more sense as an aesthetic than as a political program.

An important force in creating a degree of rationality, in both aesthetics and politics, was George L. K. Morris. A brilliant intellectual and aristocrat who helped found *Partisan Review*, Morris was also the leading American promodernist art critic of the thirties. In his own regular column in *Partisan Review*, initially dedicated to promoting both radical politics and radical art, Morris defended modernism and encouraged the small but growing American avant-garde. Despite the astute clarity of a few painters like Morris and Stuart Davis, the politics of American artists during the Depression, when most were government employees, were confused and confusing. However much the artists identified with the working class, those

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who painted in modernist styles knew they could not afford to have their art judged by the masses. This was only one of the contradictions that inspired daily discussion. The artists, in general, felt passionately about social justice, but they had no real programs short of the idea that art belonged to the people.

Gorky, who barely survived the Turkish massacre of the Armenians, which left him orphaned and homeless, had strange political ideas: he once suggested that the best thing the artists could do for striking taxi drivers was to teach them how to shoot. At another point, he characterized the W.P.A. murals as "poor art for poor people." Barnett Newman, who had a job in his family's clothing manufacturing business and did not join the Project, was a leading figure in New York anarchist politics. He ran for mayor on the anarchist ticket with a program that stressed public art and cultural events.

Although it had various colorations and made varying degrees of sense, the consensus was that art could achieve its proper function, i. e., serve the people, only in the context of a democratic socialism. "The choice was never between Democrats and Republicans," sculptor Dorothy Dehner recalls, "but between communism and socialism." *Partisan Review* quickly became the rallying point for the anticommunist point of view. In an article published in *Partisan Review* in 1939, Clement Greenberg repeated what was at the time a generally held conviction: "Today we no longer look toward socialism for a new culture—as inevitably as one will appear, once we do have socialism. Today we look to socialism *simply* for the preservation of whatever living culture we have right now."

There was a certain ambivalence, however, in the avant-garde embrace of socialism. The fear, voiced in the same essay by Greenberg, was that the danger in any form of egalitarianism resulting in the dictatorship of the *taste* of the masses, would inevitably degrade art to kitsch. Stuart Davis, following Léger, thought that problem could be solved by creating a high art based on popular sources which would speak directly to the people. This was a compromise that John Graham, an ideologue easily as voluble as Davis, found hard to accept. That ambivalence quickly evolved into a rejection of political content by members of the New York school. When the Project was disbanded in the early forties, even those avant-garde artists like Krasner and Pollock who had held strong political convictions during the Depression turned inward toward a more subjective and personal art. No longer part of a collective social activity like the

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W.P.A. Project, members of the New York school, disenchanted with utopian schemes of all types, relocated the notion of "liberation" and "revolution" within the surrealist context of psychology and poetry. A disappointment in Marxist and utopian ideals of liberation would redefine "action" not as a political but as an aesthetic expression.

Coming in

PARTISAN REVIEW

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Fred Misurella

NOT SILENT, BUT IN EXILE AND WITH CUNNING

When I look back, I see us always as discontented and protesting, but also, at the same time, full of optimism. We were sure that the cultural traditions of the nation (its skepticism, its realism, its profoundly rooted doubt) were stronger than that Eastern political system imported from abroad, and that our traditions would sooner or later subjugate that system to themselves. We were the optimists of skepticism; we believed in its subversive force and in its victory.

Milan Kundera

In one of his essays, Milan Kundera tells this story about the end of that optimism: During the third day of the Russian occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968, he was in his car somewhere south of Prague. The highways, fields, and forests were filled with Russian footsoldiers. As he approached the town of Budejovice, three Russian soldiers stopped his car and searched it. When they were satisfied that he carried nothing seditious or contraband, the officer in charge asked Kundera in Russian, "What do you think? What are your sentiments?"

The question was not sinister or ironic, Kundera writes; rather the officer seemed to reach for some rapprochement. He said, "All this is a big misunderstanding. But it will work out. You should know that we love the Czechs. We love you!"

Kundera says, "Understand me. That officer did not disagree with the invasion. Not at all. They all spoke as he did: their attitude was founded not on the sadistic pleasure of the rapist, but on another archetype: the wounded lover. 'Why don't the Czechs (whom we love so much) want to live with us and in the same way as us? What a shame that we had to use tanks to teach them about love!'"

A white-haired man whose bright blue eyes reveal a smiling, somewhat aloof intelligence, Kundera had travelled to the West with privileged attachments, similar to Nabokov's. Intellectual, private, a man who would rather talk of aesthetics than politics, he is the son of

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Editor's Note: This article was written after interviews and correspondence with Milan Kundera begun in July of 1982.

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a concert pianist, a former jazz musician, and author of a study of the Czech composer Leoš Janaček. As a fiction writer, he wants to leave his political past behind him so that he can create it anew in his imagination. When asked about the criticism of his political aloofness by other dissidents, Kundera defends himself philosophically. Political concepts are inadequate to a proper understanding of human life, he says. He passed twenty years in a country (Communist Czechoslovakia) where *any* human problem, large or small, was considered only in the political context, and now he wanted to concentrate on other things. But the terrorists and bureaucrats of all political persuasions are undermining human life. "They are telling us," he says, "you are never free. Even in a democracy, when you are a citizen of another country, we can reach you."

Asked why he lumps together bureaucrats and terrorists, Kundera replies as if it were a matter of structural linguistics. The terrorist and bureaucrat share an interlocked vocabulary that "restricts, reduces, limits" the idea of what we make of ourselves as human. "The terrorist endangers private life, and, as Kafka has shown, the bureaucrat invades it. Because of them we are in danger of hearing Newspeak and Doublethink everywhere."

"We have taken the habit, in our days," Kundera says, "of exaggerating the importance of the political system (it is the heritage of vulgarized Marxism, adopted, very curiously, by both the right and the left), and we have ceased to understand what culture is."

In January 1980, Milan Kundera published an essay on Kafka in *Le Débat*, a French intellectual journal. The essay, "Quelque Part Là Derrière" ("Somewhere Behind There"), describes the Kafkaesque universe and relates it to the absurd in twentieth century art and life. It is Kundera's clearest statement about the relationship between twentieth century politics and literature. In the article, Kundera says that the term *kafkaian* "determined solely by the images of a novelist, appears to be the only common denominator of situations (equally literary as real) which no other word," psychological, sociological, or political, can define. He lists four conditions that typify the Kafkaesque in contemporary life: (1) its universe is an immense, labyrinthine institution obeying laws that the ordinary individual cannot understand and that have no relation to human needs or interests. This institution is a mechanism, like a computer, that has been programmed, but we no longer know when or by whom; (2) in the bureaucratic universe of Kafkaesque social life, the institutional dossier operates as a Platonic ideal: it, rather than physical existence,

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represents reality. The human being is only a pale shadow of what his dossier contains; (3) in the traditions of psychological and religious thought, human error, fault, or guilt seeks its proper punishment; but in the Kafkaesque system the individual is punished and then must search for the fault; and (4) while the Kafkaesque world contains humor, it does not allow the luxury of objective laughter; rather it puts humanity inside the joke, into what Kundera calls the "horror of the comic." In doing so, the Kafkaesque denies individuals the heroic grandeur of tragedy.

Modern history tends to produce the Kafkaesque on a grand social scale, Kundera goes on to say. He points to the increasing tendency of those in power to make themselves divine, the growth of a bureaucracy that institutionalizes the labyrinth for all societies ("as far as the eye can see," in Kundera's phrase), and the increasing depersonalization of individuals. Having been expelled from the university, seeing his books destroyed, and having his name erased from the telephone book, Kundera has experienced this depersonalization firsthand, but he is quick to add that depersonalization occurs in the West as well as the East. In fact he sees the whole planet becoming a model of the world Kafka described in *The Trial* and *The Castle.* This depersonalization has an interesting technological note in Kundera's description of the Kafkaesque universe as a mechanism that is programmed as if it were a computer, but whose operator has left the keyboard. It is a conception of the absurd, but it is also an analogy very close to the eighteenth century deist's model of the solar system as a wound clock. Yet while the organizing principle of time imposed an order that eighteenth century man could understand and measure, an unknown system is the primary organizer now. A circuit can break at any moment or the program may last forever. No one knows; no one *can* know because we do not understand the limits of the machine or the original programmer's language.

Kundera relates this philosophic vision to Kafka's experience in his family and at the office. In a totalitarian society, Kundera says, the Kafkaesque manifests itself by erasing the line between public and private lives. So Kafka's writing anticipated twentieth century political and social developments because those developments corresponded to his private experience. The totalitarian regime, Kundera says, attempts to make society one big family: in doing so it denies private life. While many critics have read Kafka's work as an expression of a desire for community and human contact, Kundera says that *The Trial* and *The Castle* are really about the loss of privacy. *The*

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Castle's Surveyor wants to be accepted "not by a community, but by an institution." He must renounce his solitude and that, says Kundera, becomes his hell: "He is never alone, the two aides sent by the Castle follow him incessantly. They watch his first act of love with Frida, seated above the lovers on the coffee counter, and from that moment, they never quit their bed."

Violation of solitude is also the opening theme of *The Trial.* Two unknown men come to arrest Joseph K. in his bed, and from that moment he has no private life. The organization dominates him, controlling his time, forcing him to live in public while it accompanies him through his trial. The organization, a totalitarian society, acts very much like a family. They surprise you in your bed, arriving "as your mother and father liked to. . . . The public is the mirror of the private, the private reflects the public."

In that reflection Kundera describes the office world, a "world of obedience," as similar to the world of the bedroom and, at the same moment, like the Kafkaesque universe of the programmed computer. The office clerk, a child, is a small cog in a grand administrative machine whose goal escapes him. His world is abstract, Kundera says, and Kafka's art is that he found epic poetry in it. "The office is not a stupid institution," Kundera quotes Kafka as writing to Milena; "It will reveal the fantastic more quickly than the stupid."

If, because of that vision, Kafka's accomplishment is immense, his work is significant, not because he was politically engaged, according to Kundera, but precisely because he was *not* engaged. The poet and novelist do not invent, "they unveil," like history, "what man is, what there is in him . . . what his potential is." In "Quelque Part Là Derrière" Kundera praises Kafka because he set an example for what Kundera calls "the radical autonomy of the novel." He writes, "By spotlighting what he knew of the small, intimate moments of practical life, Kafka never doubted that the ultimate evolution of history would set them in motion on the larger stage."

It is an interesting comment that illuminates Kundera's attitudes toward the social obligations of the writer. Yet some dissidents in Paris wondered at the conscience of a man who, having been blacklisted himself, could remain silent when a fellow writer's life is, as all of theirs have been, threatened because of his political comments. One explanation lies in a philosophic pessimism that goes beyond Kundera's conception of the Kafkaesque, perhaps owing more to the structural anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss. In a passage from *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, Kundera says:

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> World domination, as everyone knows, is divided between demons and angels. But the good of the world does not require the latter to gain precedence over the former (as I thought when I was young); all it needs is a certain equilibrium of power. If there is too much uncontested meaning on earth (the reign of the angels), man collapses under the burden; if the world loses all its meaning (the reign of the demons), life is every bit as impossible.

In the context of Kundera's work, this passage bears close scrutiny. His sense of private and public evil, his little essays on the loss of personal and cultural memory, and the absolute futility of his characters' attempts to regain their pasts, or to change their present lives, bespeak a determinism that is exemplified by despotism and the presence of Russian tanks. Yet at the same time there is his commitment to art, the world of order and meaning, "the reign of the angels," and in that context the writer's task in troubled times is to exercise creativity, to remain aloof from political events at the same time he uses them in his compositions.

In "Litost," one of the stories in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, a Czech student attends a meeting of his country's major living poets. Kundera imagines the meeting as a symposium of the great European writers, giving the participants names such as Goethe, Voltaire, Boccaccio, Petrarch, and Lermentov. But his description of the meeting is skewed by the perspective of time, distance, and height—the Olympian height of art:

> I watch them from the distance of two thousand kilometers. It is now the autumn of 1977. For eight years my country has been drowsing in the sweet, strong embrace of the Russian empire, Voltaire has been thrown out of the university, and my books are banned from all public libraries, locked away in the cellars of the state. I held out a few years and then got into my car and drove as far west as I could, to the Breton town of Rennes, where the very first day I found an apartment on the top floor of the tallest high-rise. When the sun woke me in the morning, I realized that its large picture windows faced east, toward Prague.
>
> Now I watch them from my tower, but the distance is too great. Fortunately the tear in my eye magnifies like the lens of a telescope and brings their faces closer.

The mixture of aloofness and feeling in this passage, the combination of poignant loss and art, are typical of Kundera's writing. They occur again in his cruel eroticism, in the mockery he makes of

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his characters' attempts to be significant, and in the cynicism with which he overlays almost all portraits of human suffering. He has been accused of not caring for his characters and of being morally irresponsible. But he uses irony as a primary technique to control the expression of his own feelings. "The more I think of it," he said in the summer of 1982, "the more I think of myself as a man of the eighteenth century." The comment may surprise some, but Kundera, describing the eighteenth century as a time of political dislocation and revolution, also speaks approvingly of its art. He admires the sense of play in its musical variations, its improvisation in fictional narrative, its humane emphasis on reason. Most of all he likes what he refers to in one of his essays as the eighteenth century habit of "doubt and clarity."

One of the more recent of Kundera's works to appear in Paris, *Jacques et son Maître (Hommage à Denis Diderot)* is a play that furnishes a clear way into the humor, techniques, and motivations behind much of Kundera's work. It may also provide further clues about his political thinking in general. As is well known, Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* inspired Diderot to write *Jacques le Fataliste.* Imitating Sterne's pattern of digression, with its interruptions, false premises, and asides, Diderot added further technical complications to his narrative by giving it five distinct voices. Adapting to fiction the polyphonic structure of a fugue, Diderot interwove three tales of thwarted love as told by four different speakers and made all of them depend upon the whims, caprices, and false premises of a fifth speaker, the book's narrator who, like Tristram, continually reminds the reader of the arbitrary nature of the novel's events. With each speaker's voice working in counterpoint to the other four, Diderot placed his basic theme (and joke) in Jacques's mouth: "Everything that happens to us down here, for good or ill, is written above."

Diderot, of course, is "above," as well as at the reader's elbow, and the comedy of the novel plays on the ambiguity of the reference in that phrase. Philosophically, it is a statement of determinism, but aesthetically Jacques's comment also says something about the nature of storytelling. For Kundera, who believes in the arbitrariness of history, Diderot's narrative must have seemed a perfect vehicle for his own writing. In his introduction to the printed version of *Jacques et son Maître* Kundera tells how the idea for the play occurred. As in much of his work, history provided the catalyst. Shortly after the Russian invasion of 1968, when Kundera had lost his university professorship and could no longer publish in Czechoslovakia, a theater

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director tried to help him earn money. He asked Kundera to write a dramatic version of Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*, but to his own surprise Kundera had some problems with the idea. ". . . I re-read *The Idiot*, and I understood that, even if I had to die of hunger, I could not do the work. That universe of excessive gestures, of obscure profundities, of aggressive sentimentality repelled me. I felt an immediate and inexplicable nostalgia for *Jacques le Fataliste.*" Soon he began to imagine Jacques and his master as characters in his own play.

But, he asks, "Why that sudden aversion to Dostoevsky?" He wonders if it was an anti-Russian reflex caused by the invasion of Soviet tanks. No, he answers, because he never stopped liking Chekhov. Was it doubt about the value of Dostoevsky's work? No, again, because that would have taken thought, objectivity, and his aversion was more visceral than intellectual. "What irritated me about Dostoevsky," Kundera says, "was the *climate* of his books; the universe where everything becomes sentiment; in other words where sentiment is raised to the level of truth and value."

Sensibility, in its sympathetic, emotional sense, is indispensable to man, according to Kundera, but it is frightening from the moment it becomes a criterion of truth, a justification for behavior. When it replaces rational thought, it becomes "the foundation of close-mindedness and intolerance," or, as Jung said, the "superstructure of brutality."

For Kundera, the elevation of emotion to the level of value is rooted in Western history, perhaps beginning when Christianity separated itself from Judaism. In his preface to *Jacques et son Maître* he quotes Saint Augustine's famous dictum: "Love God and do as you will," and judges the phrase as significant because it moves the criterion for truth from the external world to the interior one of the heart, to what Kundera calls the "arbitrariness of subjectivity." From that point, love replaced the clarity of Jewish law, becoming the standard by which to judge behavior: "Jesus on the cross taught us how to adulate suffering; chivalric poetry discovered romantic love; the bourgeois family made us feel homesick for the hearth; political demagogy succeeded in sentimentalizing the desires of those in power." From the individual figure on the cross to the political symbols of the state, the power of sentiment is broadened but, beginning with the Renaissance, a complementary spirit of reason and doubt, and an awareness of the relativity of all human things, balanced Western sensibility. "It was then that the West entered on its plenitude," Kundera says, and when the weight of what he calls "heavy Russian

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irrationality" invaded Czechoslovakia in the form of loving soldiers riding in tanks, he felt an immediate and instinctive need to breathe the Renaissance spirit of reason. "And it seemed to be concentrated nowhere as densely as in that feast of intelligence, humor, and fantasy that makes up *Jacques le Fataliste.*"

The philosophy of *Jacques le Fataliste* certainly complements Kundera's perceptions about history, but the feast of intelligence and fantasy that he sees in it complements his sense of aesthetics too. Kundera changed Diderot's original title to *Jacques et son Maître* and thereby humanized the original theme at the same time he emphasized the forms of social and spiritual control in Jacques's life. More significant, in adapting the novel's polyphonic structure to the stage, Kundera eliminated its most imposing voice, the narrator's, and his new title is a means of emphasizing that difference. Jacques's theme, "Everything that happens to us down here, for good or ill, is written above," takes on a more contemporary note because of the very absence of the narrative speaker—in this case the author—who must be there if the play exists but who, paradoxically and unlike Diderot, does not address his audience. Thus the play reverberates with twentieth century intimations of the absurd and the death of God, and Kundera conforms to the traditions of those ideals by describing the set as "for the most part vacant." He also says that while the action takes place in the eighteenth century, it is an eighteenth century that we dream of today, and he advises that the historicity of his characters be "lightly stamped."

In the introduction Kundera provides an outline of the history of literary characters that is the reverse of his outline of the history of Christian sentiment. Relating the development of Western literature through pairs of famous masters and servants, he provides a key to his own attitudes:

> With an illiterate peasant as his servant, Don Quixote left his house one day to fight his enemies. One hundred and fifty years later, Toby Shandy created a large mock battlefield in his garden; there he abandoned himself to memories of his youth as a soldier, faithfully assisted by his valet, Trim. Trim limped exactly like Jacques who, ten years later, entertained his master during their travels. He was also as talkative and stubborn as, one hundred and fifty years later, in the Austro-Hungarian army, the assistant Josef Švejk, who amused and horrified his master, Lieutenant Lukac. Thirty years afterward, while waiting for Godot, Vladimir and his servant found themselves alone on the empty stage. The voyage was over.

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A history of famous picarros, the passage can be read as a history of the reign of sentiment also, moving from Cervantes's broad social commentary to the individual, philosophic one of Beckett. Don Quixote went out to fight the sixteenth century in order to create in it his romantic visions of chivalry; Toby Shandy relived the glory of his days on the battlefield of Namur; and the good soldier Švejk stumbled his straight-faced way through the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire during World War I. With that empire fallen, bringing down with it the reign of sentiment, the age of modernism began, and Vladimir could strut and fret an hour upon the stage, reasoning his way through the difficult questions of existence. The scene, as Beckett describes it, "a country road and a tree," is as empty as the scene in *Jacques et son Maître*, and the Godot whom he awaits is as absent as Diderot's narrator, whose voice Kundera has excised from his adaptation (or "variation," as he calls it).

Kundera opens the play by placing into Jacques's mouth several questions about destiny that Diderot had given to himself as narrator. As Jacques and his master walk onto the stage, Jacques glances at the audience, wonders who they are, and then addresses them. He asks if they cannot look elsewhere. Then he asks what they want. "Where we come from? (*He points in back of him.*) There. And where are we going? (*Philosophically.*) Does anyone know where he's going? Do *you* know where you are headed?" A few lines afterward he recites his famous fatalistic formula to his apprehensive master: "Sir, you never know where you are going. Believe me! But as my captain always said, it is written above."

From that point the play moves forward, through the characters' travels, the recitation of Jacques's first love, his master's frustrated passion for Agathe, and the famous affair of Madame de La Pommeraye, whose story is told by a lady innkeeper. The characters move on two levels of scenery. The forward part of the set, at stage level, occupies the present, containing the travels of Jacques and his master, their conversation, and the people they encounter on their journey. The rear of the set is a raised platform, connected by a stairway to the main stage, that occupies the space of the stories Jacques and his master tell about themselves and that the lady innkeeper tells of Madame de La Pommeraye. The characters move freely between the two levels and frequently act within the stories that they narrate, addressing their interlocutors as they do. By that means the raised platform occupies the present as well as the past, and much of the play becomes a dialogue between the real and the imaginary, and the world of experience versus the world that exists in memory. As

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in Diderot's original, imagination and memory are more interesting than their counterparts, but in Kundera's play the crucial absence of the narrator's voice flattens the action on the level of the present and imparts greater depth—and fragility—to the events at the rear of the stage. In dramatizing the importance of the human mind and its ability to conceptualize experience, Kundera has borrowed from structuralism, which he calls one of the greatest impulses of modern culture, as well as from Beckett and Diderot.

But here, as frequently happens in Beckett's world, the minds of Kundera's characters, comic and energetic though they may be, have little to work with. After Jacques, by a quirk of fate, has been saved from hanging and he and his master have been reunited ("even the worst of poets would not be able to invent a more joyous ending to his awful poem!" exclaims Jacques), Kundera presents a resolution that is not as rich as Diderot's, but is in keeping with the streamlined, minimalist proportions he has given the rest of his play. Jacques asks his master to lead him forward, and their final dialogue becomes a comment on the relativity of human thinking:

> Master: I'd like to, but . . . forward—where is it?
>
> Jacques: I'm going to reveal a grand secret. A centuries old trick of humanity. Forward is—everywhere.

Having written the play in 1971, while he still lived in Prague, Kundera expressed in it the humor and intelligence that he found in Diderot's original, but his modest variation contributes a twentieth century sense of despair. Trapped by a distrust of feeling that he strongly argues is the cause of history's human-made disasters, Kundera portrays the world as drably lit and with little potential for human comfort. It is a theme that he has returned to continually, and in "Edward and God," the last story in *Laughable Loves*, which he wrote shortly before and, as he says, in the same spirit as *Jacques et son Maître*, Kundera treats the problem more succinctly. Edward, like many of Kundera's characters, is disillusioned with the world. However, his brother has found peace by leaving the Communist Party, retiring to the country and, like Voltaire's Candide, tending his garden. Edward's brother also prides himself on his directness, and he disapproves when Edward tells him how he has recently won a woman's affections by pretending to be religious. They discuss the

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need for honesty in life, and Edward's brother says that no matter what else might be said of him, he always says what he thinks to anyone. Edward argues against this frankness with an analogy: Suppose you meet an irrational person on the street and he starts a conversation:

> If you told him the whole truth and nothing but the truth, only what you really thought, you would enter into a serious conversation with a madman and you yourself would become mad. And it is the same way with the world that surrounds us. . . . I, you see, *must* lie, if I don't want to take madmen seriously and become one of them myself.

At the end of the story an older, even more disillusioned Edward begins, like a character from Dostoevsky, to long for God. But Kundera's narrator says, "God is essence itself, whereas Edward had never found . . . anything essential in his thoughts. . . . Ah, ladies and gentlemen, a man lives a sad life when he cannot take anything or anyone seriously."

In his cynicism, in his defense of the need for fiction in a Godless world inhabited by madmen, Edward states Milan Kundera's quintessential theme: reason, intelligence, and the clarity of the West European mind are out of place in this insane world.

Milan Kundera has written, "A man knows he is mortal, but he takes it for granted that his nation possesses a kind of eternal life." However, for him and other Central Europeans recent history has thrown even that sense of national immortality into doubt. Kundera compares Lithuanians and Ukranians to American Indians, saying they are kept on what amount to Soviet reservations while their lands, their cultures, their basic means of survival are destroyed. He sees this situation as a possible model for the future of nations like Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary, as long as they are under Russian domination. According to Kundera, the Soviet Union will allow the Central European states to keep their languages and folklores, but their arts and philosophies will suffer a slow, persistent impoverishment as their populations are reduced to the Russian image. While deploring the inhumanity and irrationality of the process, Kundera does not have much hope. He thinks that the onslaught of the European culture in Africa and the Americas must have seemed equally irrational to native populations. "It is what is called Progress,"

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he says, historical progress that, like Jacques and his master, always moves forward no matter what direction it takes and is supported by nationalism and military power, neither of which has anything to do with reason.

"In the month of August 1968," Kundera writes, "the Czechs, naive rationalists, experienced the shock of the irrational." In such a world, where reason becomes a mere literary trope and Kafka reigns as a prophet of life, the only escape may lie in silence, the only politics in the absurd reality of art.

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Mark Shechner

REICH AND THE REICHIANS

Among the more affirmative doctrines to make headway among writers during and after the war was that of Wilhelm Reich, whose system of character analysis (or vegetotherapy or, as it grew metaphysical, orgonomy) pinpointed the source of recent political disaster in the armored character of Western man and prescribed an arduous program of action therapy as the key to individual salvation and social renewal. Reich's theories of sex economy and character armoring plausibly accounted for certain observed universals of political behavior: the weakness for authoritarianism in the democratic nations and the rule of what political philosopher Robert Michels had called the "iron law of oligarchy" in political systems everywhere, including the most revolutionary and "democratic" parties. Unlike Freud, whose politics were tinged with skepticism, Reich was nothing if not righteous and impassioned, and his political credentials were, on the face of them, impeccably radical. He fancied himself a democrat and a feminist and propounded something he called "work democracy," which he defined in terms reminiscent of the young Karl Marx as the "sum total of all naturally developed and developing life functions which organically govern human relationships." Fascism, then, which Reich abominated, was the political expression of an organic maladjustment, the epidemic severance of men from their life functions, rendering them susceptible to demagogic promises of fulfillment through submission to authority and healing outbursts of violence. (Some of his followers, however, including Norman Mailer and Paul Goodman, would regard such outbursts as tonic.) And despite an early affection for Marxism and membership in the German Communist Party, from which he was expelled, Reich was, by the postwar era, bitterly opposed to communism. He called it "red fascism" and "Modju"[1] and saw it as a retreat from the original democratic premises of Marx, Engels, and Lenin(!) toward dictatorship, a retreat abetted, not incidentally, by the Russian masses themselves. Substitute Stalinism for fascism in the following, typical

1. "Modju" was a term Reich constructed from the initial letters of Mocenigo, the man who denounced Giordano Bruno, and Djugashvilli, Stalin's original, Georgian name.

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explanation of the latter in *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, and you have Reich's essential explanation of it:

> My medical experience with individuals from all kinds of social strata, races, nationalities and religions showed me that "fascism" is only the politically organized expression of the average human character structure, a character structure which has nothing to do with this or that race, nation or party but which is general and international. In this characterological sense, *"fascism" is the basic emotional attitude of man in authoritarian society, with its machine civilization and its mechanistic-mystical view of life.*

Such views are not terribly distant from those of Freud, who also took politics for an expression of the universals in the character of man, or from those of Erich Fromm, who read in fascism the human desire to escape from freedom and submit oneself to the mass and the dictates of authority. But where Reich distinguished himself from Freud and the neo-Freudian revisionists was in exalting the sexual principle as the key determinant of the social will. "As social and clinical sex economy has convincingly demonstrated," he urged in *Mass Psychology*, *"the mechanism which makes the masses of people incapable of freedom is the social suppression of genital love life in children, adolescents, and adults"* (his italics). Neither the death instinct nor the superego nor the innate aggression of the species nor alienation but "the social suppression of genital love" is the bacillus of totalitarianism. But like any bacillus, and unlike a genetic defect, it is vulnerable to countermeasures. In narrowing down the problem of alienation to the sexual sphere, Reich rescued political psychology from tragic biology and delivered it into the hands of medicine—not, to be sure, conventional medicine, as the AMA and the Federal Drug Administration understood it, but medicine as premodern naturalists imagined it, as a branch of moral philosophy. "This social suppression, also, is not naturally given. Rather, it has developed with patriarchy and can, in principle, be abolished." Notwithstanding the bold sweep of his analyses, Reich was the most resolutely biologistic of Freud's renegade disciples, and there is ample reason to look upon his system as a political neurobiology and *not* as a psychology.

Reich's charm for intellectuals in the 1940s lay partly in his reduction of the field of battle from society to the body, where gains could be more easily realized, and partly in his gospel of the orgasm as the *sine qua non* of psychological and social hygiene. In part also it

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lay in his putative ability to account for the failures of the Russian Revolution and of leftism everywhere by fastening upon the sexual sphere as the missing variable in prior revolutionary calculations, and therefore, in effect, keeping revolutionary hopes alive. Sex, for Reich, *was* politics, and the contentious language of his manifestoes, with its military metaphors of blocks and breakthroughs, made his system sound less like a retreat from the blows of history than a regrouping for a war of liberation against the residual Puritanism and production-oriented austerities of American life. His rejection of adjustment in favor of revolutionary assault upon all superegos, personal and social, and his clinical methods for relaxing muscular rigidity, dissolving psychic resistance, and storming the barricades of sexual pleasure appealed to stymied radicals as adjustments downwards of the campaign against Wall Street that more conventional strategies had failed to carry through. "In the gloom of the Cold War years," Frederick Crews has observed, "intellectuals whose historicism had been shaken faced the choice of either accommodating themselves to a prosperous anti-Communist society or taking a stand directly on what Mailer, citing Reich, called 'the rebellious imperatives of the self.'" Crews, in characteristic fashion, poses the alternatives too starkly. One could be Irving Howe and vault from Shachtmanism to social democracy, risking the inevitable isolation and impotence of social democrats everywhere. Still, he rightly points out that Reich's ideas had a special cachet for revolutionists without a revolution, for whom the field of battle had dwindled to the self. It was as a sanction for individual desublimation that Reich's orgonomy rendered its appeal as an insurrectionary code, as hostile to the fetishes of party and doctrine in Russia as it was to those of achievement and production in America. Paul Goodman, in touting the political superiority of Reich's psychology in the 1940s, spoke contemptuously of the counter-revolutionary social adjustments demanded by the New Deal and Stalinism alike. Such cavalier linking of Roosevelt and Stalin seems sheer madness to us now that the nature of the Soviet state is so plain and so appalling (though it was anything but a secret in 1945), but it could seem perfectly plausible to freelance radicals after the war who saw little more in the struggle between capitalist and communist nations than shadowboxing between yin and yang, alternative expressions of the same deadly statism. Some, like Goodman and Dwight Macdonald, were anarchists; others, certainly Norman Mailer in the forties, were lingering Leninists who still smarted, ten years after the fact, from the Comintern's scuttling of all-out class warfare for a

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meliorist "People's Front" in 1935. But anarchists and class warriors alike, they held fast to their old dreams of striking deep, disclosing the basic laws of human conduct, and drawing up blueprints for the liberation of man wherever he was oppressed, in Russia or America.

In fact, once the question of Russia was settled for all but a handful of popular front loyalists, America became the great conundrum. For homeless radicals of the 1940s, some of whom found a home in Dwight Macdonald's *Politics* during its brief existence, Moscow and Levittown enjoyed a certain parity as centers of the emotional plague. America's wartime alliance with Russia was either the lull before Armageddon or a treacherous reconciliation of opposites into a repressive global imperium—the end of history by bang or by whimper. "It is a war fought by two different exploitative systems," instructs McLeod, Norman Mailer's spokesman for the Trotskyist analysis in his novel, *Barbary Shore*, "a system vigorous in the fever of death, and another monstrous in the swelling of anemia. One doesn't predict the time precisely, but regardless of the temporary flux of military situation (*sic*), it is a way which ends as a conflict between two virtually identical forms of exploitation." The prospect of peace between the new superpowers was scarcely more cheering than the threat of war. For the work of liberating mankind, hands across the sea loomed as ominous as guns along the shore. The state of tension, even were it not to erupt into shooting, could only strengthen the machinery of domination in both societies, fostering permanent garrison states in which the regimentation of populaces, sustained by their citizens' anxious flights from freedom, would effectively destroy all social distinctions between the two. Indeed, the advent of McCarthyism would be taken by some as proof positive of the Stalinization of America. And yet, while Trotskyists and anarchists alike might concur on such theses as these, few had any heart for spirited calls to arms. To whom would they be issued? To the rank and file of America's "proletarians," employed as never before in a dynamic, expanding economy and organized into labor unions that were skilled at converting surly impulses into wage and hour demands? To the restive "petit bourgeoisie" who were so busy turning their candy stores into supermarkets that calls to revolution never got past their answering services? To the legions of white negroes (and some black ones too) gathering nightly at the San Remo in anticipation of the Great Revolt or a fistfight between rival poets? To the comic armies of the night that, two decades later, would essay to levitate the Pentagon by mantra power alone? Who were the toiling masses anyway?

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It was altogether reasonable, then, that stymied intellectuals, drugged by the daily crisis, downcast over their isolation, and weary of signing up for cold war congresses, conferences and committees sponsored by Moscow or Washington, would respond to a political biology that appealed to their most anarchic appetites while promising comprehensive social benefits from their indulgence. "Unrepressed people," declared Paul Goodman in the pages of *Politics* in 1945, "will provide for themselves a society that is peaceable and orderly enough." Saul Bellow's Moses Herzog says it more bluntly later on, musing that "to get laid is actually socially constructive and useful, an act of citizenship." Would that Reich had Herzog's, and Bellow's, concision, for Herzog's quip speaks tedious volumes. Reich could be as literal-minded about sex and salvation as any bachelor on the loose and just as monotonous. Dispensing with the tedium of organization and theory, of party caucuses and Marxist study groups, he envisioned a revolutionary *Geist* disburdened of wearisome politics. The revolution could be forwarded at home, in bed, in the revolutionist's spare time, saving him the agonies of canvassing and cajoling, factional rivalries and power struggles, conflicting doctrines and hair-splitting interpretations, and, most gratefully, painful appeals to a working class that was fundamentally hostile to revolutionism. In the Reichian Utopia, the Party would be abolished and the new revolutionary movement organized along the lines of the clinic or research institute. (Indeed, as social redemption became a function of personal prophylaxis, doctrine took a back seat to counseling.) Man's compulsive escape from freedom would now reverse itself spontaneously as his treatment took effect:

> The changes occurring in my patients were both positively and negatively ambiguous. Their new attitude seemed to follow laws which had nothing in common with the usual moral concepts and demands, laws which were new to me. The picture presented at the end by all of them was that of *a different kind of sociality* (his italics).

The flow of consciousness envisioned by Reich was spontaneous and ineluctable, carrying the analysand from private desublimation to public vigilance. The lineaments of gratified desire had the curious feature of bringing to life one's social dissatisfactions. The "little man" made whole and sexually vital would not stand for a corrupt, armored, or fascist world. As he gained harmony with his own

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nature, his militancy would spread in ripples from the body to the body politic, which Reich imagined in almost Platonic terms as the individual writ large. Man and state, microcosm and macrocosm, were joined by the life force itself, and whatever impinged upon the one would quickly be registered upon the other.

Of itself that vision hardly distinguishes Reich from Marx; after all, a metaphysic of correspondences is not very different in its working details from a dialectic of man and society. What distinguishes Reich is the great literalness with which he imagined the metaphor of the body politic and the vectors of revolutionary potential. Reich's revolutionary equations always began with the private, sexual self and flowed outward toward the public, political self. (Late in his career, his erotics of redemption stretched all the way from the genitals to the cosmos.) Such a metaphysics of bodily revolt ("the gonad theory of revolution," C. Wright Mills once sneered) not only played down questions of institutional, impersonal power, it happily cancelled the tragic conflict of self and civilization that Freud took to be irreducible. Indeed, at its most extreme, orgonomy turned against the Freudian virtues of sublimation, strength of character, and self-knowledge, abominating them as toxic substances, literally carcinogens. In his later years, Reich would complain—or was it a boast?—that *Civilization and Its Discontents* was written in response to one of his, Reich's, lectures in Freud's home in 1929: "I was the one who was unbehaglich in der Kultur." Not only were the tragic vistas of the later Freud washed over by the orgonotic streams of eros, so was the sole ground of optimism on which a younger Freud had established his own therapeutic discipline: the potential for self-correction through self-awareness. Under the Reichian dispensation, self-inquiry became just another layer of suppressive armor, a clinically fashionable way of blocking the flow of natural vegetative juices. If the hero of Freud's old age was Moses, that of Reich's was the segmented earthworm. The modern therapeutic offshoots of the Reichian ethos such as EST have maintained this hostility to reasoned self-interrogation which, according to them, merely reinforces the inhibitions that afflict the neurotic. Viewing modern man as Hamlet, they see the native hue of resolution everywhere sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought.

How American this sounds, and how profitable it has become to Reich's spiritual heirs, from Fritz Perls and Ida Rolf to Arthur Janov and Werner Erhard, who recognized the growth potential of spiritual relief and were wary enough not to rouse the Federal Drug

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Administration on the way to the bank. And thus how strange it is to ponder the FDA's persecution of Reich for so naive a contraption as the orgone accumulator, which posed neither a political nor a sexual challenge to American society, and was so transparently useless that the taste for it shortly would have proven as perishable as the rage for T'ai Ch'i or the Last Chance Diet had not the FDA confirmed Reich's paranoia by tacking an earthly martyrdom onto his intergalactic trials. That too, Reich's final episode of arrogant hucksterism —which he conducted, naturally, as a crusade—was American to the core. The orgone accumulator was as harmless as Hadacol and innocent as snake oil. Reich's bioenergetic revivalism, despite its origin in German dialectics and the thought-tormented arena of Jewish modernity, was surprisingly in tune with the upbeat mood of postwar suburbia. Its promises of psychic rebirth, moral reawakening, and a magical reintegration of the alienated self had an American zest to them. Reich didn't put the ailing into analysis; he sent them into training, and there is a quality in his demeanor—the crackpot boosterism—and a note in his voice—a boozy collegiate vivacity—that recalls not Freud or Marx or Trotsky but Woody Hayes. Had the FDA not prosecuted him as a cancer quack and banned the sale of his orgone accumulators—those upright plywood coffins, their walls packed with rockwool and steelwool to catch and focus the fluxions of eternity—they would surely have found their way into dens and rumpus rooms all over America, alongside the barbells and the exercycle, to become bioenergetic supplements to aerobic dancing and tantric yoga. In the orgone box, as on the exercycle, one enjoys the grateful illusion of moving forward without having to leave the house.

Reich was a revivalist for the post-Bible belt, and what he offered was nothing so much as a secular, erotic baptism into a life beyond conflict and neurosis. Such an appeal, the appeal of ecstatic rebirth, had implications far beyond the intellectual circles in which they initially took root. When one peels away the layers of militancy that were properties of Reich's own abrasive character but not necessarily of his therapy, one discovers a revolutionism for the depressed suburbanite, fearful of "conforming" and just as fearful of taking any drastic step that might expose his imaginary independence. We see him on bike paths everywhere as the man in the gray-flannel warmups, jogging away the blues, lonely as a long-distance runner in the evening, solid as a Rotarian from nine to five. Holding the therapies of "adjustment" in contempt, Reichianism and its spin-offs, from

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Gestalt to EST, have cleared a path to social adjustment by inducing regular, convulsive fits of rage in the therapeutic session, creating a purely synaptic equilibrium and permitting the troubled individual to get on with the loathesome job at hand. In orgonomy, Freud's reflex-arc becomes a guide to the perplexed.

Even among intellectuals, who are less inclined to equipoise and appreciate the uses of imbalance, it does seem to be the case that they, in their Reichian phases, while striking anti-American postures, were always profoundly patriotic in their deeper intuitions. "America" announced Allen Ginsberg in a famous early poem, "I'm putting my queer shoulder to the wheel." Certainly, the self-reliant brand of radicalism they advanced appealed to the same American love of tinkering and weekend projects that spawned the do-it-yourself craze in home improvement and auto repair. Reichianism was pragmatic and self-applied, and like capitalism it envisioned the transformation of private labors into public benefits. Yet it was not just the convenience of mounting a revolution by simply mounting a friend or the authorization of the orgasm as a blow against repression or even the opportunity to join erotic forces with the hedonists of Peyton Place that made the appeal to intellectuals so seductive. Two other factors were bound to register with artists and writers. One was the promise that sexual desublimation would also free the imagination. Artists and writers, after all, are patrons of the unconscious and know better than anyone how painful the daily solicitation can be. The deeper life on which the artist must draw is not always on tap, and artists are always on the lookout for ways to allure it, stalk it, beguile and tame it. Philip Rieff, in typical sneering fashion, charges in his book, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic*, that artists in the forties and fifties found the Reichian doctrine that identifies the artist with the "genital character" flattering, and therefore flocked to it from a grateful sense of being the erotic elect. Yet common sense, and some available evidence, urges a different view: that it was misery, not self-congratulation, that drew artists and writers to orgonomy, *the misery of not being able to strike deep at will* and the promise of communion with the waters of the imagination as they raced through the canyons of the mind.[2]

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2. The journals of Isaac Rosenfeld, the most dedicated of his generation's literary Reichians, have nothing of self-congratulation in them, but plenty to say about therapy as a prompt to creativity. See the excerpts from Rosenfeld's journals in *Partisan Review*, 1, 1980.

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And yet, one wants also to observe the degree to which Reichianism *did* elevate the freelance intellectual into the role of moral and cultural leader who could exercise a salubrious influence on the culture by the example of transcending it. As Paul Goodman, as Norman Mailer, as Allen Ginsberg all understood in the sixties, it was not only their ideas that elevated them to positions of moral eminence but their examples, the lives of free eroticism they *seemed* to be living. Goodman, chagrined by the prospect of sainthood before death, endeavored mightily to keep all that was raw and tormented in his character on show. It did little good, as the cachet attached to his spokesmanship for desublimation overshadowed the more unsavory aspects of his compulsive cruising. Reichianism is indeed, as Rieff has complained, an antipolitics, though a more precise term might be counterpolitics, since it seeks to revolutionize the social order by transforming the individual, rather than organizing and deploying power. In Reichian thought—and the politics of Goodman's Gestalt were essentially Reichian—personal culture, rather than being a superstructure, is the very engine of the social order and therefore the key to social change. It is the magnetic field that binds the politics of the body to the body politic and the crucible in which the liberated intellectual, not the politician or the minister or even the soldier, is the indispensable catalyst of change. Yet, in a counterpolitics as in any other, the rebel has his eye on power; he simply approaches it in new ways and looks for new windows of vulnerability. The hero of a counterpolitics confronts power without a sword, armed only with the moral example of his being, an example which the isolate, the martyr, and the poet are best equipped to furnish. In a counterpolitics, the only slingshot David permits himself is his superior moral character. Where Gandhi, modern history's outstanding counterpolitician, took that superiority from an exemplary abstinence, Reich supposed it to derive from an exemplary indulgence. If Freud, then, was the social philosopher for intellectuals who saw in the agony of Europe a picture of man's fate, Reich supplied the program for those who saw in America, an eroticized, Whitmanized America to be sure, a picture of man's hope.

It was Reich, then, more than Freud, who captured the imagination of stranded Trotskyists in the 1940s and provided the program that, for a brief moment, was the implicit script for efforts to confirm a new literary radicalism. Jew, exile, and finally martyr, he was the Trotsky of mental revolutionism, a romantic hero for homeless radicals in search of a rallying point during and just after the war. Like

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revolutionary Marxism, Reichianism was an ideology of liberation with uncompromising values, a world-integrative view of reality that armed its adherents with basic interpretations, and rigid internal dialectics that pointed the way to freedom through submission to a stern agenda of treatments. It was, then, both a dogma and a discipline. Among the literary Reichians, Isaac Rosenfeld recast his entire life into a bioenergetic mold, becoming for his contemporaries the very spirit of Greenwich Village as he conducted his life with the sole aim of breaking through to his "animal nature." His fiction and literary essays incorporated major elements of Reich's moralized energetics, and they can still be read as illustrations of the power and the limits of a moral criticism that portrays life as a flux of vital substances. Saul Bellow absorbed the Reichian system intact into his own scheme of character analysis in two novels, *Seize the Day* and *Henderson the Rain King*, and two plays, "The Last Analysis" and "The Wrecker." But in all this writing, Bellow's typically ironic handling of ideas makes it hard to tell where he is appealing to their explanatory powers and where exploiting their amusement value. Paul Goodman, a lifelong post-Marxist who never went through Marxism and the only therapist among the New York intellectuals, fashioned his own system of Gestalt therapy on a Reichian base and would later become the most influential spokesman for Reich's ideas. And Norman Mailer would, in his *Village Voice* columns and *Advertisements for Myself*, conduct a stunning public demonstration of therapy that would eventually make him famous and rich. It was in the writing of Goodman, Mailer, and Allen Ginsberg in the 1950s that Reich's revivalism was most faithfully recorded and the ideology of the redemptive orgasm most consistently promoted as a comprehensive plan of social renewal. These three were the most political of the literary Reichians and, not surprisingly, the most influential in an intensely political decade. It was they who made the romantic ferment of the late 1940s available to the counterculture of the 1960s, who joined hands between kindred decades across the great desert of the fifties. They were the conduits for that current of revivalism that looked to the body as the redeeming agent in a corrupt world. They were the instructors in breaking through.

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Millicent Bell

THE BOSTONIAN STORY

It is well known that to translate is to traduce, and this is true of the "translations" one medium makes of another, of the cannibalism habitually practiced—however tenderly—by film upon the novel. Yet every film version of a novel is an instructive mistaking. At the very least it can send us back to the original to make our own rediscoveries, to force upon it, perhaps, a new translation or betrayal of our own, what we call a new critical reading. The recent film version of *The Bostonians* does this with special interest just now, for no work by Henry James seems to be so directly concerned with one of our own chief preoccupations—the question of the relations of the sexes and of the nature and consequence of sexual difference in our culture.

James's novel is certainly one of those works that seems to change shape as the times change. Markedly unpopular with its first readers, both as magazine serial and book, it never gained standing in James's lifetime, and even he rejected it, finally, for inclusion in his comprehensive New York Edition. Yet its greatness was suddenly sensed by critics after World War II when its unsympathetic view of Boston feminism in the 1870s seemed to speak to a later pessimism concerning projects of social change. The return to critical appreciation of *The Bostonians* was initiated by three reprints, each accompanied by an interpretive introduction that drew its inspiration from this pessimism—Philip Rahv's, to the Dial edition in 1945, Lionel Trilling's, to the Chiltern Library edition in 1953, and Irving Howe's, to the Modern Library edition, in 1956. The views these writers expressed have been persistently influential, yet it seems likely that we can now find other grounds than theirs for appreciating it.

The reading of the novel most compatible to the formulas of film derives from a plot of pure fairy tale. A beautiful princess with skin the color of milk and hair the color of flame falls into the hands of a witch who lays her under a spell. Successive suitors attempt to free her, but only one, a stranger from a far country, succeeds in awakening her from the witch's enchantment by the power of his love and his might at arms, and he carries her away with him to be his wife forever. It is no surprise that Christopher Reeve, who represents Basil Ransom in the film, looks as healthily handsome as if he

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were drawn in cartoon outline (as befits Superman), though James's own description of him requires that he look sour and worn, down on his luck, embittered by the defeat of the South and the collapse of his family fortunes. He looks, in a word, as though the dew were still fresh on his romantic virtues. But more sophisticated critical summaries of the story have also tended to make Ransom into some sort of romantic hero—at least a Byronic one. Trilling saw him as "an ideal intelligence . . . an imagined proto-martyr" of the Southern Agrarians, "an intelligent romantic conservative." The combination of conservative politics and a fear of "the loss of manhood," Trilling claimed, made him an upholder of an older heroic strain in an age of degenerate radicalism, and made it necessary that he capture his female prize, the beautiful young feminist, Verena Tarrant, even though this triumph meant the defeat of her principles and of her hope of an independent selfhood.

Not everyone has accepted this heroic Ransom, however. Howe criticized Trilling's view, recognizing James's pervasive irony in handling this figure, and concluding that while Ransom "lays claim to a disenchanted realism, he reveals more than a touch, as James meant he should, of the sentimental and callow." One can go further in noting the brutalism beneath his sentimentality, as the language by which James represents his thoughts about Verena often shows (for example, "if he should become her husband he should know a way to strike her dumb" or, "to go away proved to himself how secure he felt, what a conviction he had that however she might turn and twist in his grasp he held her fast"). Yet Ransom wins, according to Howe, because he must, because his ideology, however questionable in itself, is not as "equally in opposition to the natural and the human" as his opponent's. He is still the heroic champion of naturalness.

The opponent, Olive Chancellor, had been identified explicitly as lesbian in Rahv's essay. While previous readers had been well aware of the exaggerated intensity and desperate need expressed in Olive's hold of Verena, it required the modern viewpoint, sensitized to the identification of homosexuality, to recognize this attachment as expressed (though not necessarily "genital") eroticism. For some, no doubt, such an idea makes Olive simply the fairy-tale witch, a perverter and corrupter of young innocence, and makes the hero's successful capture of the girl a "rescue." Today, however, more readers will recognize the nature of Olive's passion and still reject the characterology of the fairy tale, reading the novel in another romantic way as simply concerned with a love triangle, the oldest of plots, in which

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a man and a woman instead of two men contend for one girl. Some such reading seems to have been in the minds of the directors of the film and governed Vanessa Redgrave's moving portrayal of Olive. We cannot mock her as she runs sobbing on the beach at Cape Cod searching for her lost love who is somewhere on the water in a boat with Ransom, and we understand—horrified but participating—the ambiguity of her visions of Verena's drowning. When she returns later and falls into Verena's arms we do not dare to despise her, though both scenes verge on the ludicrous. Redgrave has made her performance the heart of the film and lifted the character to the height of tragedy.

Yet one is not quite certain how James saw the relationship he gives us without naming. He had set down his preliminary idea of "a study of one of those relationships between women which are so common in New England." How did he conceive "those relationships"? He had one close at hand in the case of his own sister. Alice had suffered a not uncommon fate as the only girl in a male-dominated household. Her two older brothers were the redoubtable intellectuals, William and Henry; her two younger were Union soldiers who expressed their choice of the life of action on the battlefield. But for her there was no alternative to marriage as a mode of self-definition, and that mode was, for the bright, spirited girl, unappealingly illustrated in her own mother, a complacently Victorian domestic saint. In young womanhood, Alice took to her bed as a permanent arrangement of life. But she managed to acquire in Katherine Loring a devoted friend who became nurse and possibly lover and who completely assumed responsibility for her care. The family knew enough to be grateful for a sustaining presence that relieved it of the burden of this invalid member and offered Alice, as James said, "a devotion so perfect and so generous" as to be "a gift of Providence." In 1883, the pair joined Henry in England where they were to live in close contact with him until Alice's death; it was in the early months of this proximity that he began *The Bostonians*.

Did the Jameses think of Alice and Katherine as "abnormal"? There is no hint available in their letters that this was so. It seems that the age we stigmatize as "Victorian" accepted the establishment of close relationships of female bonding which our own day unhesitatingly labels deviant. Such relations were indeed common in New England, as James said; there was even a common term for them—they were called "Boston marriages." James's title for his novel, in fact, may refer not only to the locale which encloses his two women

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and explains their attachment to reform but, covertly, to this expression. And yet, the relation so designated did not have the same psycho-sexual connotation for that age as it has for ours. Pre-Freudian as James and his contemporaries were they may have had a subtler —more accurately Freudian—sense of that gradient along which all human beings are distributed with more or less of sexual responsiveness to both sexes, the polarized genital homosexual being only different by his or her location at the extreme of the gradient. Female bonding, moreover, had a necessary social function in the nineteenth century, for a society which so severely isolated the sexes drove women upon one another for support and understanding. As Carroll Smith-Rosenberg demonstrated in a famous article in *Signs* ten years ago, such female relationships were intense enough and often expressed themselves so overtly in amorous word and gesture, in kisses and embraces, as to be susceptible of the labelling of our own times, yet they would not have been marked out in this way a hundred years ago, and often did not obstruct heterosexual marriage, were tolerated components in married lives. They had their necessary place in the social scheme.

James's Olive is clearly an extreme instance, since she actively hates men and since it is her desperate wish to prevent Verena from marrying. Yet with a sense of the general tolerance in the last century for close female attachments we may respond more accurately to the atmosphere of this novel in which *no one*, not even Ransom, ever charges Olive and Verena with depravity. It is enough condemnation of Verena's parents that they give her over to Olive for payment without adding to their crime acquiescence in their daughter's seduction by the bad witch. The film does not make her a witch, since it finds its place in its own recent tradition of modern movies and plays dealing sympathetically with homosexuality, but it makes our suspicion of Olive's lesbianism a certainty. Visibility, the inevitable language of film, must, moreover, always be explicit in a way words need not be—to *see* the embraces of Olive and Verena is to have the sense of entering a privacy that James's verbal narrative does not pierce. This visibility seems to remove all ambiguity for the modern audience—although even the direct witness would not have felt that way in the nineteenth century.

But the film translation, as I have already suggested, converts the tale to tragedy, making Olive a tragic martyr or at least a Racinian victim of fateful passion. More certainly than the novel the film is forced to make Olive its protagonist and, quite logically, cannot rest

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on the fairy-tale happy ending of Verena's rescue. Quite brilliantly, in fact, the screenwriter adds a further scene beyond Verena's last-page departure with Basil from the Music Hall where she had been scheduled to give her feminist oration. Our last filmic moment—not given by James at all—is of Olive addressing the irate, frustrated ticket-holders. Like a tragic protagonist she then seems to reach an enlightenment in her moment of utter defeat and humiliation. She, who has been so fatally "personal" in her attachment to an abstract principle, whose idealism has been rendered suspect by her purely private need, now attains a true and admirable impersonality when she tells the audience that though they must be disappointed in missing Miss Tarrant's eloquence it is not, after all, the speaker that matters but the message, which even she can validly communicate.

But this is not James's ending, for James is really writing neither romance nor tragedy, but comic satire, in *The Bostonians*. Romance is disposed of in the novel's final line, which scotches the fairy-tale happy ending by a wry authorial comment as her knightly lover pulls a weeping Verena onto his steed, so to speak: "It is to be feared that with the union, so far from brilliant, into which she was about to enter, these were not the last she was destined to shed." This rejection of "happily ever after" is clearly something that the filmmakers could find no use for, desiring as they seem to have been to preserve *both* romance and tragedy (for two kinds of movie audiences?) and to keep *both* Basil as fairy-tale hero and Olive as tragic heroine.

Yet it is prepared for in the novel. The married union is, in fact, viewed with extreme suspicion throughout the book, for it is really clear that, like Alice James, even the beautiful Verena has had no valid alternatives, that all unions are—like the national one, so recently restored by a bitter war—doomed to be compromises of dominion and submission, that democracy, political or domestic, is a dream. Where could Verena have found an example of that marriage which like the utopian vision of democracy and national unity allows the fullest expression of individual self to each, and the strength of combination at the same time? Certainly not in the marriage of her parents—the hideously exploitive and hypocritical Selah Tarrant and his wife who has given up every shred of original dignity or conviction. Verena greatly admires the feminist leader Mrs. Farrinder, that Sherman tank of a woman of whose marriage it is simply said, "she had a husband, and his name was Amariah." Of the domestic possibilities of the once-married Mrs. Luna, Olive's sister, one can only judge from the character of her atrocious little boy and her dis-

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honest and distasteful siege of Ransom. Indeed, if any one does represent sexuality of a "normal" heterosexual sort it is Mrs. Luna, but how repulsively and calculatingly she uses her sexuality!

Trilling found the key to *The Bostonians* in the death—in 1881–1882—of James's parents, and quoted what he calls James's "impassioned memorial" to his mother: "It was the perfect mother's life—the life of a perfect wife. To bring her children into the world—to expend herself for years, for their happiness and welfare—then, when they had reached a full maturity and were absorbed in the world with their own interests—to lay herself down in her ebbing strength and yield up her pure soul to the celestial power that had given her this divine commission." But this bitter naturalism, which makes woman a creature like the spawning salmon that must die when its reproductive role is over, can only pretend approval. This murderous martyrological view of motherhood cannot, really, be James's idea of the best outcome of femininity.

His general view of marriage may be reflected on for a bit, here. He had at some early point in life quite rejected the prospect of marriage for himself. Speculation tires itself over the question of whether or not he was undeviatingly celibate, whether or not he was hetero or homosexual, whether, a child of the Victorian age I have described, he sharply saw himself as absolutely one or the other. This is clear. He feared for himself the compromises of marital union, perhaps of any union beyond the most occasional emotional—or physical—contact that his cautious personality permitted. "The port from which I set out was, I think, that of the essential *loneliness of my life*—and it seems to be the port also, in sooth, to which my course again finally directs itself," he told Morton Fullerton in 1900. Whatever the exact psychic reasons—sexual inhibition, consciousness of deviance or whatever—he embraced the solitary life and found in it a positive value, particularly for the artist, as he expresses in "The Lesson of the Master" (1888) in which a famous writer warns the neophyte, "Marriage interferes!"

Verena, if we wish to think of her that way, is a sort of artist, gifted with her natural histrionic talent and her beautiful voice, which others wish to exploit—Olive for the Movement, and Basil, as he bluntly tells the girl, for the caged canary song-notes that she will warble before his hearth. But I do not believe that James was so seriously concerned with Verena's artistic possibilities as with the general threat marriage poses to human potential. Fear of the constriction to an allotted social role and a surrender of a large measure of personal

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self-determination is the motive of Isabel Archer's prolonged refusal of marriage in James's *The Portrait of a Lady*, published five years before *The Bostonians*. In Isabel's world, the feminist movement does not yet exist, and she is supported in her vague resistance only by her friend Henrietta's example as an "independent" woman and not really by her, for it is Henrietta who consistently champions the suit of Casper Goodwood. It is no accident that the book begins and ends with Isabel's flight from Casper, for it is he who represents the threat of union with masculinity in its most absolute form. It is true that he does not—to our knowledge—hold such beliefs as the Mississippian Basil Ransom who despises all notions of egalitarianism and regards women as a species of chattel, hardly more deserving of freedom than the slaves who have been taken from him. Casper is a cotton manufacturer and an inventor, however, and so a representative of new social and economic power and new forms of slavery in Isabel's native country—from which she has also fled. And he represents masculine force in its sexual sense, too. His embrace is that seizure to which her entire nature almost submits, since she too is a sexual creature. He presses upon her the only authentic kiss in the whole book (and almost in the whole of James's writing) while she feels "each thing in his hard manhood that had least pleased her, each aggressive fact of his face, his figure, his presence, justified of its intense identity and made one with this act of possession."

Isabel, of course, marries, but not Casper and not Lord Warburton, who would likewise confine her to a role as chatelaine of his castle while he continues to wield power over his broad lands and to influence politics as a member of the House of Lords. She marries, perversely, a man who boasts that he has "never tried to earn a penny," a man without profession or place precisely *for* these negative reasons, precisely because he seems to her to have disdained such measures of personhood, even as she has herself. In the end, we know, she finds that she is mistaken in Gilbert Osmond, and that marriage with him only discloses in a hideous intimate form the cruel inevitability of dominion and submission.

So pessimistic a view of marriage is surely present to James in *The Bostonians*, which probes deeply into what James thought had happened to the culture as a whole because of the division, the deepest in society, that sex difference made. He had come back from Europe in 1881 after five years in England and looked again at his native land, particularly at those foci of the culture, Boston and New York. *The Bostonians* was the result of that new, hard look and also a re-

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sponse to the charge that he could not write about society—the way the French naturalists were doing—and that he had turned his back on the study of his own native materials—as some of his American critics reproached him. Both impulses promoted the composition of a work which contends with its own ironically present patterns of romance and tragedy by its view of the basic structures of real life and local scene. So, his subject, as he said, was "very national, very typical. I wished to write a very *American* tale, a tale very characteristic of our social conditions, and I asked myself what was the most salient and peculiar point in our social life. The answer was: the situation of women, the decline of the sentiment of sex, the agitation on their behalf."

The three last phrases in this well-known statement are ambiguous, and James's exact meaning along with the reason for their peculiar order has not been satisfactorily explained by the numerous commentators upon the novel who have quoted them. Only the third has an indisputable sense—he wished, among other things, to characterize the new movement for women's rights which had succeeded abolition as a leading reform cause. A good many modern historians have confirmed the impression James seems to have had that feminism had been born out of the lingering energies of abolitionism; certainly many of the early leaders had broken the prejudice against public speaking by women on abolitionist platforms. Like Miss Birdseye in the novel, they harked back to "the heroic age of New England life—the age of plain living and high thinking, of pure ideals and earnest effort, of moral passion and noble experiment." But somehow, James seems to say, as he presents the company of grotesques and self-servers who meet in Miss Birdseye's parlor, the waters of New England idealism, once fed from the purest springs of protestant ethicism, had grown murky and unwholesome. In an iron age of corrupt national politics and ruthless business expansion, reformism itself had become less pure, great causes had yielded to trivial ones in a proliferation of fads and crankism—and even a legitimate social issue like female rights was confused by the hysteria, morbidity, eccentricity of its partisans.

James has a good deal of sour fun in characterizing this company in his novel, beginning with Miss Birdseye, who seems based on Elizabeth Peabody, a much-beloved relic of the abolitionist past who had been a friend of Emerson and edited the *Dial.* Readers of the novel's early chapters, including his brother William, were shocked by his portrayal of her (in a famous passage of Theophrastan humor)

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as a dotty enthusiast "who knew less about her fellow creatures, if possible, after fifty years of humanitary zeal, than on the day she had gone into the field to testify against the iniquity of most arrangements." James actually finds other uses for Miss Birdseye as the novel proceeds; she becomes a serene elderly fairy whose status as a representative of confusion and delusion is less important than her role of benevolent sponsor of the courtship of the young lover (about whose interest in the Cause she is quite deceived by Basil's deliberate contrivance). But the portrait of Mrs. Farrinder, politician of the Cause, is a damning vision of how idealism can generate leaders in whom the human element seems minimal. Still more repellent is the quack mesmeric healer, Tarrant, who has discovered a better opportunity in the natural eloquence of his daughter and has hypocritically primed her for the feminist lecture circuit. His wife, hardly any nicer, grovels when Miss Chancellor of Charles Street takes up her child. Olive, of course, is better than these others—her feminism is an honest vision—but Ransom is not wrong, just the same, in finding her morbid, someone who "takes things hard" constitutionally, who hates men not only for the wrongs they have inflicted but because there is no answering response in any part of her nature for what the sexual relation with them can give. And she is a jailer, she is an exploiter, she does presume to govern another life, no less than he.

But all of this unattractive company might be redeemed by Verena. She is, on the one hand, really the princess of fairy tale, an idealized American girl such as James had depicted before. Because she is not merely the product of his naturalist-satiric imagination, she escapes the compromising closeness of detail and relation to the environment of all the other characters. She stands like a fresh young goddess against the sordid scene which cannot account for her as it accounts for everyone else. As such, her significance is mythic; with her sweetness and passivity she stands for something virginal and potential in the American world, something given by nature to fractious and selfish mankind.

But she is also a real figure, a hopeful instance of a young feminist who is both sincere and generous. Though she hates Ransom's ideas she cannot hate him; she is able to feel kind interest even in his publication of a reactionary article (expressing views that stir her indignation) because it gives hope to his personal ambitions. Her speeches may be worth careful examination. They are not at all contemptible, though simplistic, and full of a naive eloquence that James does not make ridiculous. They give us a quite accurate picture of one

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phase of the feminist movement. "Poverty, and ignorance, and crime; disease, and wickedness, and wars! . . . To kill each other, with all sorts of expensive and perfected instruments, that is the most brilliant thing (men) have been able to invent. It seems to me that we might stop it, we might invent something better. . . . Why shouldn't tenderness come in? Why should our women's hearts be so full of it, and all so wasted and withered, while armies and prisons and helpless miseries grow greater all the while?" she asks. She does not—nor does anyone else—explain how this female tenderness will "come in"—she does not mention suffrage. But she is clearly drawing upon the notion of female "influence" which such an arbiter of feminine opinion as Sarah Hale, the editor of *Godey's Lady Book*, offered as a conservative alternative to the militant demand for specific "rights."

But the plea for female influence rests on another widely held principle, the doctrine of the female "sphere" or what Barbara Welter has called "the cult of true womanhood" by means of which middle-class women in the nineteenth century made the home—to which they were confined—a bastion of power. Exalted as guardians of morality by men increasingly committed to an immoral struggle for economic and political power, they became the major force behind the liberal churches of the day. Without roles in business, without office, but with leisure to read, they virtually took over the popular literary scene not only as mass consumers of fiction but as writers of it—to the consternation of male authors such as Hawthorne, who complained of the "damned mob of scribbling women" who had invaded his profession. The result was what Ann Douglas has called, in an important study, "The feminization of American culture."

It is to this process, maximized beyond anything he could remember, that James must have reacted upon his return to America in 1881, and it helps to explain the energy of authorial conviction which seems to emanate from Ransom's outburst that he wishes to save his sex, to save the age, "from the most damnable feminization! . . . The whole generation is womanized; the masculine tone is passing out of the world; it's a feminine, a nervous, hysterical, chattering, canting age, an age of hollow phrases and false delicacy and exaggerated solicitudes and coddled sensibilities. . . . The masculine character, the ability to dare and endure, to know and yet not fear reality, to look the world in the face and take it for what it is—a very queer and partly very base mixture—that is what I want to preserve, or rather, as I may say, to recover."

We must protest this division between masculine and feminine;

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the attribution to men of all the admirable *human* qualities is the ultimate sexual prejudice. And yet, James was not wrong if he sensed that the division that had become so absolute between male and female life had been damning to both. As practical life had become more brutalized the domain of the ethical and the aesthetic—"feminized" if you will—had become more effete. It is for this reason that Verena has no alternatives to Ransom, that the princess must marry the third prince when he comes to claim her. His indubitable masculinity, dreadful as it is, is a better thing than the offering of either of her previous suitors, the meretricious publicist Matthias Pardon or the rich dilettante, Burrage. For the sad fact—and it cannot be other than sad under the circumstances—is that men and women are incomplete without each other, and that Olive's radical feminism—which dispenses with men altogether—will never work for most women. But does marriage "work" either? James, deeply pessimistic, hardly thought so as he foresaw Verena's tears. In any case, union with Olive would have been no less productive of them, ultimately, that union being founded, as the story shows, also on the principle of dominion and submission, the rule of power.

BORIS SOUVARINE
1894-1984

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Paul Hollander

FURTHER EXPLORATIONS IN THE THEORIES AND PRACTICES OF SOCIALISM

Books on the theories and contemporary incarnations of socialism continue to come forth in a seemingly endless stream. They fall into several categories. There are, to begin with, authors limiting themselves to the theories of socialism (usually Marxism of some variety and interpretation) and averting their eyes from existing socialist societies, or at any rate, societies which claim to be socialist and have succeeded, by and large, in making Western public opinion accept the claim. Writers of this type are capable of discoursing on the fine points of theory and its conflicting interpretations, as if the practices followed in the name of the theory raised no questions whatsoever about the validity or relevance of the theory in our times. Books in this group are permeated by at least an implicit belief in socialism which, however, need not have an identifiable historical or geographical locus or incarnation. At the same time, many authors of this persuasion are motivated by fervent anticapitalist sentiments, take the desirability of socialism for granted (undisturbed by the problems of its attempted introduction) and seek the transformation of their own Western society along socialist lines.

Another approach, by contrast, focuses on particular countries or social systems which claim the socialist credentials and seeks to understand the degree of correspondence with or divergence from the original socialist ideals, and it may offer explanations of the gap between theory and practice.

There are several explanations of the persisting interest in the theories and ideals of socialism associated with Marxism. The first may well be the continued, nagging discontent felt by many Western intellectuals with their own societies and their recurring attempts to transform them, to find alternatives. The second explanation is the very existence of societies which are supposedly socialist and the disputes generated by their characteristics, and especially their deviations from the ideals of socialism. Ever since the establishment of the Soviet regime in 1917 until the recent rise of "Nicaraguan socialism," the expectation has been that the latest incarnation of the socialist ideals with be *the* authentic one; each time the collapse of such hopes has led to a renewed search for a new incarnation. This

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point leads to the most likely explanation of the persisting appeals of socialism: the search for faith or redeeming values in Western societies. Evidently neither the return to more traditional religious values nor the various innovative spiritual gropings of recent times have provided intellectuals with lasting satisfaction and met their needs for meaning, sense of community, and social justice. Hence socialism, a much bedraggled ideal (and the associated secular humanism), is all they are left with.

The two books by Feher, Heller, and Markus[1] (Hungarian emigres of comparatively recent vintage) and *Confiscated Power*[2] by d'Encausse are enlightening additions to the literature on socialist, or, as some of these authors call them, "Soviet type" societies. That a reviewer in 1984 should praise books for providing essential information about such societies is a good indication of the surprisingly limited progress which has been made in understanding such political systems in the West. Thus grotesque stereotypes and profound misunderstandings, embedded in vast undifferentiated ignorance, are still plentiful today in the media and among the educated public and politicians.

Let me mention here only two recent and related developments which tellingly illustrate the continued public misapprehension of the nature of Soviet type societies. One is the spread of the unilateralist sentiment and the other, less well known but even more revealing, is the so-called Ground Zero Pairing Project in this country. The major flaws of unilateralism have been dissected often enough (among others, by Sidney Hook in parts of his volume here reviewed). It should suffice to say that it is wrong because: (*a*) it assumes that *Western* disarmament will, once and for all, remove the threat of nuclear war (ignoring the possibility of such a conflict between Communist regimes); (*b*) it invites the alternative of nuclear war or submission to Soviet power (better red than dead).

The Ground Zero Pairing Project seeks to match American towns and cities with what are (mistakenly) assumed to be their Soviet counterparts and establish informal, nongovernmental contacts between citizens of such "matched" communities in the belief

1. *Dictatorship over Needs.* By Ferenc Feher, Agnes Heller, and Gyorgy Markus. St. Martin's Press. $27.50.
   Hungary 1956 Revisited. By Ferenc Feher and Agenes Heller. Allen & Unwin. $28.50.
2. *Confiscated Power.* By Helene Carrere d'Encausse. Harper & Row. $19.95.

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that they will discover their common humanity and shared interest in survival through such apolitical contacts. It is further postulated that once this happens, each in their own country will start exerting pressure on their respective governments to disarm or reduce their nuclear arsenal and pursue more peaceful policies. The Ground Zero Pairing Project has released across the United States (including academic communities with a highly educated population) vast reservoirs of ignorance and naivete about the Soviet Union, providing fresh evidence of how little progress has been made over the years in understanding the character of Soviet society. (Four major flaws of this approach may be noted here briefly. They include the belief that ordinary Soviet citizens can engage in informal, nongovernmental contacts with citizens of the United States; that they can bring to bear pressure on their government to modify its policies or propose new policies; that they would be willing to propose policies different from those already publicly embraced by their government; and that the "discovery" of common human characteristics such as love of one's children, the interest in certain recreational activities, the preference for peace over war, etc., will transcend historical-political-cultural differences between the two political systems.)

The fear of nuclear war as a factor in the current development (or stagnation) of public and even elite understanding of the Soviet Union cannot be underestimated. Unilateralists, freeze supporters, and pairing project enthusiasts are at one in their desire to redefine—overtly or subliminally—the nature of the Soviet system in order to justify their hopes and wishes. For those bent on such a wishful redefinition of the Soviet regime, it is essential to substitute for the image of a system expanding its political and military influence that of a political system which responds to the needs and wishes of its citizens.

There have been echoes of the popular wishes and fears among Soviet specialists too. It will be recalled how, for example, Andropov's rise to power prompted a wave of wishful speculation about the enlightened and rational policies this supposedly Westernized political figure was to initiate; more recently we were assured by Mr. Armand Hammer (on the op-ed page of *The New York Times*) that the new leader, Chernenko, is the one "we can work with." (Mr. Hammer managed to work with them all.)

One of the major accomplishments of *Dictatorship over Needs*, perhaps the most substantial of the volumes here reviewed, is its serious and sustained effort to come to grips with the question: Are

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the contemporary societies generally considered socialist, socialist indeed? It is hard to overestimate the importance of systematically confronting this question since there has always been a tendency in the West to go along with the self-characterization of societies which assert that they are socialist. But terminology matters. Even when critics of such societies observe their shortcomings while bestowing on them the "socialist" label, they concede something of importance, some basic if limited legitimacy and moral virtue which by implication capitalist democracies are devoid of. And even those who dispute the "socialism" of these societies seem to acquiesce in their usurpation of the appellation.

This state of affairs, in turn, allows these countries to harvest at least the residual goodwill of Western idealists and become beneficiaries of their benefit of doubt. Displaying the socialist label thus becomes at least a proof of good intentions—if not results; in turn such intentions tend to disarm Western intellectuals, who rarely devote to the analysis of societies so labelled the same emotional energy and determination to locate the gaps between theory and practice they display in the study and criticism of their own societies.

Feher, Heller, and Markus go a long way toward demolishing the self-serving claims of putatively socialist societies. Moreover, they suggest that there is *some* connection between the deformations of practice and the theories which inspired them:

> . . . since socialism does not exist except as the sum of its historically existing varieties, nineteenth and early twentieth-century socialist doctrines are at least co-responsible for the "real socialism" of today, even if we reassert our statement that the upshot is not socialism in any meaningful sense of the term.

They locate, as a key problem in the realization of socialist ideals, ". . . a very wide gap between an uncritically maintained idea of human perfectibility . . . as the public doctrine and that of virtue in minority, a desperately pessimistic view of human substance, as the secret doctrine."

While regarding themselves as "radical socialists," they tell the reader in the first sentence of the book that "the emotional and intellectual motivation for writing this book was the exact obverse of the French maxim: *tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner.* By contrast . . . we sought to understand the whole of 'real socialism' in order critically to expose this new and formidable system of internal and external

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oppression. . . ." In particular, they sought to speak to Western leftists whom they correctly regard as harboring illusions and misconceptions about existing "socialist" regimes. Not surprisingly, central to the argument of the authors is the link between socialism and democracy ("we cannot conceive of socialism without democracy"). Correspondingly, one of the goals of the study is to strip regimes calling themselves socialist of their "socialist facade"; hence the term "dictatorship over needs" is useful in reminding the reader that they *are* dictatorships and that they are dictatorships of a novel kind, more ambitious and more comprehensive than the many other varieties of repression history has produced. Here one should also note that the authors do not recoil from using the concept of totalitarianism. They point out that:

> . . . in a totalitarian society the identification of public and private goes hand-in-hand with the definition of the obligatory creed and politics of the subject by the state. . . . All present East European societies are totalitarian, independently of the degree of their pluralism-tolerance. In them pluralism has been outlawed to just as great an extent as before and this is precisely what totalitarianism by definition means.

Unlike many Western students of Soviet type societies, Feher, Heller, and Markus do not confuse the patterns of domination in such systems with bureaucratization per se. They are cognizant of the uniqueness of Soviet type bureaucracies, "not characterized by formal rationality." Moreover, "the Soviet bureaucracy *has* to be inefficient in order to accomplish its true aim: to stem the tide, to defer the satisfaction of the population's needs. . . . Its function is primarily to practice dictatorship over needs. . . ." Along these lines they also shed new light on the matter of rationality many foreign observers and sympathizers have mistakenly associated with supposedly socialist regimes:

> Anyone entering these societies from the world of calculative rationality has, as first impression, the feeling that he has arrived in Bedlam. Nothing functions, or at least nothing does in the way one would expect having been brought up in the spirit of rationalist standards . . .

Elsewhere they observe:

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> . . . one of the basic experiences familiar to any citizen of an Eastern European society—the experience of impotent rage when confronted with the sheer irrationality of this acclaimed logic of planning, expressed in the production of waste . . . and in a staggering overdevelopment of the unproductive apparatus of organization and control. Both are organic features of an economic structure where the only connection between consumption and production is realized through the administrative decisions of a centralized and hierarchical bureaucracy.

In short, these regimes are characterized by the "simultaneous production of waste and scarcity"; they "systematically produce and reproduce artificial shortages."

Full employment, the major accomplishment of these societies, is also subjected to critical scrutiny:

> According to the formulation of the constitution, "right to work" means guaranteed employment. It entails however something else too, namely compulsory employment. . . .
>
> . . . the right to work coexists in these societies with the legal obligation to work enforced through punitive measures . . . it does not mean the obligation to earn a living through one's own labor . . . but the obligation to earn it in administratively recognized jobs and places of work, and in this way it is an important element of the general social-political control over the population.

Unlike many American commentators on Soviet domestic problems, our three authors do not believe that the economic weaknesses observed exert pressure on the Soviet Union to scale down its global involvements and aspirations:

> It is no exaggeration to say that the Soviet empire's leap forward has been taken to escape from internally unresolvable problems. . . . The real motivating force of Soviet imperialism is the utopia of Soviet leaders, that by eliminating world capitalism they could eliminate "dissenting wishes" from the minds of their subjects. . . .
>
> . . . in the last fifteen years . . . the Soviet Union has launched a type of foreign politics practically unknown in its preceding history, that of political imperialism. . . . The goal is to increase

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> political influence and gain dominance in new spheres all over the world . . . the perfection of the army is the main target: only a strong army can back imperial politics.

They also note an affinity between the Soviet regime, its foreign policies, and many Third World dictatorships:

> . . . the "export of revolution" means largely the export of the oppressive technology of government perfected by the Soviet apparatus, which certain local power elites are only too eager to take over. . . . They are Bolshevik in the important sense that the Bolshevik technology of oppression appeals to them. . . .

It is worthy of note that the authors of a study which so illuminatingly and mercilessly catalogues the defects of political systems claiming to have been inspired by Marxism continue to see themselves as Marxists or "radical socialists." Moreover, unlike many other intellectuals in the West, they don't flinch from entertaining the possibility (as indicated in an earlier quote) that there may be *some* connection between the theory and the practices it had unwittingly inspired. If so, their clinging to a Marxist identity is at least mildly puzzling. Perhaps Sidney Hook's observation[3] (in his writings here reviewed) may apply to their case as well:

> . . . today when a person characterizes himself as a Marxist, we no more know what he really believes than we do when a person claims to be a Christian.

Hungary 1956 Revisited by Feher and Heller is a short study of a recent revolutionary attempt to redress the huge imbalance between theory and practice. It is also a reinterpretation of the 1956 revolt and its aftermath with more than a few references to the new order which replaced both the aspirations of the revolution and its Stalinist antecedents.

The authors do not share the Western euphoria over the accomplishments of the Kadar regime ("an enlightened police state" they call it) or what Khrushchev called "goulash communism" and caution against "confusing pacification with legitimation." They

3. *Marxism and Beyond.* By Sidney Hook. Rowman and Littlefield. $22.95.

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believe that its Western popularity is in part connected with guilt feelings over the failure of the West to do anything constructive in 1956 (yet things did not turn out that badly) and in part a product of a condescending attitude toward Eastern Europe which must not expect anything significantly less authoritarian. I would add yet another reason. The Western celebration of Kadar's Hungary is also, at least unconsciously, motivated by the desire to conjure up a less threatening image of the Soviet Union and its domain. Surely, if the Soviet regime allows within its empire as much political and economic freedom as Hungary has obtained, this shows that it has become a more reasonable power with which the West can do business and coexist in détente happily ever after.

The new element in their interpretation of the revolt is somewhat strained and appears to be a product of the desire to apportion blame for its defeat evenhandedly between the Soviet Union and Western powers. Needless to say, the Western powers share responsibility for the Yalta and Potsdam agreements which delivered Eastern Europe into the Soviet orbit. But it is a rather big leap from this proposition to suggest that "despite the 'false consciousness' of many Hungarians in revolt, their rebellion was directed against *all* signatories of the Yalta and Potsdam agreements, against the Western protagonists as well as the Eastern." The authors also argue—perhaps again in order to blame both superpowers for the defeat of the Hungarian Revolution—that the latter presented unique opportunities for the United States to enter into negotiations with the Soviet Union and "end the cold war."

Such reservations notwithstanding, this is basically a judicious reassessment of what the revolution did and did not try to accomplish and what its impact has been on Hungary and the rest of the world.

Confiscated Power is one of the more ambitious overviews of the Soviet system to appear in recent years. It represents a rewarding combination of political, sociological, and historical perspectives, and it makes use of a great variety of Soviet sources, including sociological data. The volume strikes a careful balance between approaches which stress the vulnerabilities of the Soviet system and those which treat it as virtually immutable. Yet, for good reasons, the author emphasizes the factors which make for the stability of the system, preeminent among them the bureaucracy and the techniques of socialization. She writes:

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> The improvements made in the system of government have transformed a bloody personal tyranny into the administrative dictatorship of an oligarchy. But this transformation has not changed the basis of the system . . .

It is among the virtues of this volume that it offers both sweeping generalizations (well-grounded in data) about Soviet political institutions and practices and specific details about the workings of the system. Of particular value are the discussions of the Party, the problem of succession, the function of elections and popular "participation," the success and failure of political socialization, the dimensions of dissent, the rise of religious and nationalistic feelings—all of which add up to a carefully drawn and persuasive balance sheet of the strengths and weaknesses of the system. It is a remarkable book because of the author's ability to grasp and articulate the contradictory facets of Soviet society. Thus, for instance, on the one hand:

> . . . 8 million people in all are permanently charged with supervising and instructing Soviet society. In this network of convergent training systems and activities, all of which spread the same ideas and values, the life of the ordinary citizen . . . leaves little room for personal reflection and the search for other sources of information.

At the same time:

> In a survey carried out in the early seventies in a Leningrad factory 75% of the workers questioned about what motivated their attendance at political training sessions answered that they attended meetings because they were forced to. . . .

Young people in particular ". . . seem to brush aside everything that has to do with politics," and their occupational aspirations significantly diverge from the prescriptions of the authorities. Data from readership surveys also attest to the apolitical disposition of the majority of Soviet people.

Although social mobilization replaced coercion, the authorities will not accept "associations established outside their control." Social mobilization, or what I prefer to call pseudo-participation, is designed to occupy "the totality of social space in order to leave room for no possibility of mobilization or organization foreign to it."

While much has been made among some Western Sovietologists

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about the rise of interest groups in Soviet society sometimes leading to the attribution of pluralism to the system, d'Encausse reminds us that although the Politburo has become "the place where the various bureaucratic apparatuses were represented," this does not mean that the Soviet power "has evolved toward institutional pluralism" since "the Party remains the integrating element . . . the Party exercises . . . arbitration."

What has certainly not changed is the "will to power [that] allows the political system to survive, to impose itself on rebellious or sceptical societies. . . ." It is the will to power that links domestic and foreign policies and seeks to compensate for domestic stagnation by foreign initiatives:

> Domestically, the authorities have encountered nothing but increasing difficulties . . . to which they have opposed an inflexible attachment to the foundations of the system and total immobility. But in foreign affairs the same authorities have demonstrated a flexibility and dynamism that have enabled them to raise the USSR to the rank of the United States. . . . In foreign affairs the prudent septuagenarians of the Kremlin have been audacious and innovative statesmen taking all governments by surprise with their untold initiatives.

Many Western policy-makers have been unable to grasp the fact that the Soviet Union has, for a long time, pursued a "dual policy—'détente' on the one side, destabilization on the other." Hence there is a corresponding duality to the Soviet system, at once "a vulnerable country . . . and a triumphant power." The dynamic foreign policy pursued under Brezhnev (himself an undynamic person) served, among other things, the purpose of "derive[ing] legitimacy from external successes. Is the progress of communism in the world not irrefutable evidence of the Party's historic mission?"

Last but not least, the character of Soviet policies, indeed of the nature of the system, is also related to the policies and postures of the Western powers. The book ends on this somber note:

> Simultaneously weak and powerful, the USSR has based its power above all on the impotence of the capitalist world, and it justifies the continuation of a weakened and challenged system by invoking the weaknesses and challenges to the alternative system. . . . Who will be the first, the USSR or the West to be defeated by its own decline?

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Written before the death of both Brezhnev and Andropov, there are only two brief references to the current leader, Chernenko, neither suggesting his possible rise to power.

The translation often does not do justice to the rich substance of this study; as some of the quotes also show, the style is often awkward and unpolished.

The Forward March of Labour Halted?[4] is an uneven collection of scholarly and political commentaries over the failure of the English working class and the Labor Party to transform society along putatively socialist lines. Of the twenty contributors, three are academics, two journalists, and the rest assorted political and union activists and functionaries; the best known among the latter group is Tony Benn, leader of the left wing of the Labor Party. The volume is organized around the title essay by Eric Hobsbawm, which is discussed by other contributors who also include several functionaries of the British Communist Party. An air of left wing-popular front attitudes hangs over these writings, often colored by the agitprop jargon of olden times which evidently survives in these circles. For instance, thus writes Mike Le Cornu, identified as a shop steward at Heathrow airport:

> I believe we should face up to the possibility that it is the failure of our party and the left consciously to inject the necessary political content into the struggle which has largely contributed to the "forward march of labour" having halted, though I agree with Kevin Halpin that to describe the movement as having "halted" appears to be a negation of the Marxist concept of constant change.

The same author chastises another contributor for lacking "that deep analytical content based on a scientific approach to the problem." A key and recurring idea of the volume, and especially of Hobsbawm's piece, is "the period of world crisis for capitalism." The authors take many things for granted. Thus the question is hardly raised, let alone answered: Where precisely would labor march forward, or what exactly would socialism in Britain seek to achieve, and what if any lessons have been learned from existing systems which claim to

4. *The Forward March of Labour Halted?* By Eric Hobsbawm. Blackwell Press Ltd. £8.50.

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be socialist? Even Raymond Williams talks about "imperialism" as if the concept would self-evidently and singularly apply only to the United States and former Western colonial powers, and sees the world as ". . . the deadly military confrontation between the imperialist alliance [presumably NATO—P.H.] and now powerfully established socialist states. . . ." although of the latter he adds "most of these new states not of our own kind of foreseeing or desire." Still he calls them socialist. Hobsbawm by contrast evinces greater sensitivity to the problems of socialism in practice as he mentions "the crisis of bureaucratization in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe." In this and a few other fleeting references, he succeeds at least occasionally to rise above the singularly British concerns of the volume.

Marxism and Beyond is a collection of eighteen pieces, some of which directly address the most crucial issues in the interpretation and application of Marxism, while others range over topics which include the Frankfurt School (an especially outstanding piece), "Lenin and the Communist International," "Communism and the American Intellectuals from the Thirties to the Eighties," "A Critique of Conservatism," "In Defense of the Cold War, *Neither Red Nor Dead*," as well as critiques of authors dealing with problems of Marxism, Stalinism, and American society. Such diverse pieces are held together by an uncommon degree of lucidity, a profound knowledge of Marxism and political theory in general, and the author's commitment to what are the most important and enduring Western values. Especially impressive is Hook's capacity to write about abstruse issues of Marxism without the ponderousness and opaqueness that attend most similar discussions. A major thrust of the volume and of the lead essays is the clarification of the divergence between the Marxism of Marx and that of Lenin, and of the political practices of all those legitimating their rule by invoking Marx's name in our times. Hook is particularly insightful and enlightening in explaining why Marxism has retained and even increased its appeals of late, notwithstanding its inapplicability to the modern world, its numerous erroneous predictions and blind spots.

He suggests that "Marxism is a monistic theory that offers an explanatory key to everything important that occurs in history and society. . . . It provides a never failing answer to the hunger for explanation among those adversely affected by the social process. . . ." To which one might add: and increasingly also for those not adversely affected—such as prosperous Western intellectuals—who nonetheless also hunger for such explanations and a coherent worldview.

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Secondly, he points out, Marxism is a *hopeful* theory of history, all the more welcome at a time when the condition of mankind as a whole and of individual societies offers little to be cheerful about and the problems of secularization are far from overcome. While he fully understands the contemporary appeals of Marxism, he has little patience with those who seek to transform it into a theory of alienation on the basis of the early writings of Marx which his later mature work thoroughly contradicted. ("The doctrine of alienation . . . violates the entire historical approach of Marxism which denies that man has a natural or real or true self from which he can be alienated.")

Besides the various discussions of Marxism and its contemporary uses, misuses, and interpretations, there are also topical essays on current political controversies (such as disarmament and the cold war). The great value of these pieces lies in, among other things, their capacity to remind the reader what are the truly important differences between the Western world and Western values on the one hand and the multitudinous forms of authoritarianism in the world today. Few people have been more persuasive and forceful than Sidney Hook in arguing against the false alternative between nuclear war and Western surrender. He has for decades been a rare voice of reason in a chaotic world of changing intellectual fashions and dubious political commitments.

Sidney Hook is not only a defender of the humanist legacy of Marx against those who sought to legitimate their inhumane policies by his ideas; he also teaches us how to distinguish the liberating, democratic ideals of socialism from the wide variety of misuses they have been subjected to in our times, both as vindications of tyranny and escapist fantasies of limitless "self-realization."

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Bernard Semmel

TWO VIEWS OF SOCIAL HISTORY: E. P. THOMPSON AND GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB

In the author's preface to *Capital*, Marx says to the German reader: *De te fabula narratur*; meaning, you think I am writing only of England, but this will be your fate as well. That fate consisted of the predictions of a growing immiseration in the living standards of the English working class, the growth of a revolutionary proletariat, and the final conflict as a result of a conclusive economic crisis. Some forty years before, T. R. Malthus had made a similar prediction: not of a revolutionary proletariat, of course, but of a growing impoverishment, as a result of population growth, and the creation of what, in Marxist terms, would be the "industrial reserve army" of the unemployed.

Few of these predictions materialized. And this created a vexing problem for Marxist and socialist historians. The first answer was that the English working class had been brutalized and made passive by the decline in the standard of living. In the interwar decades, the socialist journalists J. L. and Barbara Hammond, in a number of influential books, pictured in passionate detail a widespread deterioration in the conditions of agricultural and industrial workers brought about by early industrial capitalism. In convincing reply, the Oxford economic historian, Sir John Clapham, used statistical evidence to demonstrate that, on the contrary, there had been a clear rise in the wages of labor during this period and, despite intermittent falls, the rise had been constant and real.

In the 1950s, the Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm turned the issue from a "quantitative" to a "qualitative" one, arguing that despite the increase in wages, there had been a decline in the quality of working-class life; for example urban pollution had replaced rural greenery, the mechanical clock supplanted the more benign natural measure of the sun and the seasons, etc. What this also did, in effect, was to shift the terrain of argument from an economic to a social history, to the exploration of the life and character of the working classes and society, an interesting turn for a Marxist writer.

Over the last two decades or so, social history has been the field of major historical endeavor, and one of the critical problems has

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been to explain the nature of the English working classes—both their passivity and their occasional militancy. The major figure in this effort has been the Marxist historian E. P. Thompson. In his influential book, *The Making of the English Working Class*,[1] which appeared in 1963, Thompson granted that "by 1840 most people were 'better off' than their forerunners had been fifty years before," but added that now "they had suffered and continued to suffer this slight improvement as a catastrophic experience." And, then, like Hobsbawm earlier, he proceeded to discuss working-class life in cultural terms. For two decades, Thompson and his followers have dominated the field. Now the views of Thompson are being challenged, most notably by Gertrude Himmelfarb who, for many years, made her mark in intellectual history but with her recent book *The Idea of Poverty*,[2] the first of two volumes, has sought to provide a more complex picture of English social history. A contrast of these views tells us much about the writing of history today.

"The working class made itself as much as it was made," E. P. Thompson argued in 1963. And a generation of social historians emulated his efforts to recover eighteenth and nineteenth century working-class life and culture and little-known proletarian heroes and heroines. With few exceptions, orthodox Marxists had, up to then, pictured the workers as relatively passive individuals molded by great historical forces. Thompson's Marxism was not "scientific" and determinist, but of a romantic free will variety. His work was a *bildungsroman* of the English proletariat, the preindustrial artisan beset by an emasculating industrialism and the terrors of evangelical religion, attempting to construct a new culture and class consciousness from the remnants of traditional society. This effort of will, for Thompson, was not merely a defense against the intrusion of the new capitalism, but at its core a vision of a more just society.

A Communist Party member before the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956, Thompson embraced the opposition to industrial society of the romantic utopian poet and artist William Morris, the subject of his first book (published in 1955).[3] He joined Morris in the

1. *The Making of the English Working Class.* By E. P. Thompson. Vintage Books. $11.95.
2. *The Idea of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age.* By Gertrude Himmelfarb. Alfred A. Knopf. $25.00.
3. *William Morris: Romantic Revolutionary.* By E. P. Thompson. Lawrence and Wishart. $17.95.

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poet's "revolt against the world of the Railway Age, and the values of Gradgrind" in favor of the "finer and richer" values of traditional society. For Morris, as Thompson presented him, the Middle Ages witnessed "a real *community* of human beings"—a precapitalist and preindustrial community where relationships between men "however severe and binding" were not of "an impersonal labour-market," but were organic.

Thompson has accused liberal and conservative historians of an ideological commitment to economic growth, to the view that industrial progress and the widespread dissemination of material goods is a benefit, not the morally bad thing he thinks it to be. If the economic forces making for working-class revolution have failed, he believes that "will" and high moral purpose can succeed, and that the proletariat may yet be redeemed from the fleshpots of capitalism. He celebrates the artisans and laborers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries who vainly tried to turn back the industrial revolution; the Luddite machine-breakers are his particular heroes, and he pictures them as valiant defenders of the Aquinian "moral economy" against the determined efforts of a commercial society to make labor a mere commodity. If the emerging working classes did not mount a revolution during this period, he argues, it was because of their diminished class consciousness and the "psychic exploitation" of their alienated condition by Methodist preachers who with their acolytes of the establishment terrified the working class into passive submission.

Thompson joined populist social history, with a Marxist emphasis on class, to something resembling the more systematic studies of the French *Annales* school, with its heavy reliance on anthropological and psychological models. This has certainly helped to broaden the outlook of historians in the English-speaking world. In the past generation, however, this approach has achieved a prominence that has made any other—such as the history of ideas or of politics—almost illegitimate and certainly peripheral. While it has been useful to turn to previously little-explored and wayward sources for the light these may undoubtedly shed, such traditional sources as "establishment" journals or parliamentary debates are now discarded as "elitist" efforts to disguise what more obscure sources—the history of popular beliefs, mating rituals, or workingmen's memoirs—amply and more truthfully reveal. (In this, of course, the new model historians forget Marx's effective use of elitist parliamentary blue books in *Capital.*)

For the left-liberal historian of the present generation—and the

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political climate of the sixties and the seventies has left us with relatively few who do not conform to this type—the rationality of traditional political or intellectual history is a kind of false consciousness, and the nonrational presuppositions of anthropological or psychoanalytical history are more likely to be true. Like Thompson, the practitioners of the new social history are often opponents not merely of capitalism but of industrialism, and look back nostalgically on the imagined social harmonies of a preindustrial communal life.

There are different forms taken by the Marxist social history of the 1960s onward, but all acknowledge a debt to Thompson, and almost all see the semi-annual *History Workshop* as their special organ. This journal (whose first issue appeared in 1975) was founded at Ruskin College, a workingman's school at Oxford, and its guiding spirit has been Raphael Samuel, a tutor at the college. Ruskin's "history workshops" began in 1967, a time of student upheaval, as a protest against the university's examination system. Instead of traditional academic seminars, students were encouraged to infuse their historical research with their life and work experience: a workshop pamphlet on Durham coal miners, for example, was both autobiographical and historical, and explained miners' militancy in the most personal terms. Popular resistance was a leading theme of other pamphlets as well, and one on the 1911 strikes of school children saw the strikers confronted by their strike-breaking mothers. The workshops stressed local and workplace studies, seeing them as particularly useful in inspiring class consciousness as well as archival research into the activities of unknown workers and revolutionaries of the past. The sessions were marked by informality and folk-singing, and encouraged first-time nonacademic historians in an effort to realize what Samuel described as the "democratisation of historical practice."

While the pamphlet series draws mostly on the contributions of trade unionists, academic historians are well-represented in the pages of the *History Workshop* journal, which has on the whole followed the Thompsonian lines in the search for moments of revolutionary epiphany, and romantic merging of the historian and his subject. The vocation of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century "resurrection man" who reclaimed recently buried bodies in order to sell the cadavers to medical schools has been mimicked in the social historian's archival exhumation of previously unknown heroes of the proletarian resistance for political as well as "scientific" purposes. Scraps of working-class autobiography or contemporary labor ballads are

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accepted almost as uncritically as ecclesiastical chroniclers received accounts of miracles. In this way the socialist historians, generally of middle-class origin, can recreate, and their similarly-placed readers can "experience," the texture of the life of the proletariat's past, and feel a comradely empathy which somehow evades them in the world of today's working classes. The radical historians provided a proletarian and revolutionary hagiography, and whiffs of insurrectionary fervor are cherished and often magnified. If the Hammonds in their pre-1939 social-democratic gentility insisted on working-class loyalty, and argued that the government's *agents provocateurs* foisted conspiracies on early nineteenth-century workers so as to assist the forces of reaction, a militant Thompson, employing much the same archival sources, assures his readers that the working-class conspiracies in fact existed, provoked by repression and infused by a revolutionary class consciousness. Readers might in this way share vicariously the burden of exploitation and repression, the cathartic release of heroic resistance, and the self-satisfied contentment of martyrdom in a good cause.

It makes for good reading—as the lives of the saints and martyrs have made for believers in past centuries—but is it good history? In recent years, a few more stringent Marxists, like Perry Anderson and Terry Eagleton, have criticized workshop methods in the *New Left Review* as well as the *History Workshop* itself. One Marxist historian, Richard Johnson, attacked the workshop's (as well as Thompson's) "socialist-humanist history" which reduced everything to superstructure, entirely evading "the analysis of the forms, tendencies and laws of the capitalist mode of production." Johnson suggested a return to the economist Maurice Dobb's classical Marxist approach, thickened by the work of the French Marxist-structuralist Louis Althusser. An early adherent, David Selbourne, also came to doubt whether workshop methods produced good Marxist history, and described the typical workshop product as a "'*cinéma-vérité*' presentation of the past," with "its own carefully-selected *dramatis personae*, and its own carefully-handled *mise-en-scène*"—more populist art than materialist or dialectical science. Selbourne suggested that it was only in their choice of the subject of proletarian life and work that the workshop historians could be called Marxist. The Cambridge social historian Gareth Stedman Jones, a member of the *History Workshop's* "editorial collective," somewhat belatedly condemned the culturalist-qualitative tack taken by Hobsbawm and Thompson. Thompson particularly ought to have stuck to economics in the or-

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thodox Marxist manner, Jones observed, for the rise in wages merely disguised an increased "rate of exploitation"; people were "having to work harder each hour," the result being the increase of industrial disease, accidents, and deaths from exhaustion.

Defenders of the workshop's empirical methods insisted that the people helped to make their own history, and were not mere puppets of an economic determinism as depicted in traditional Marxist theory. Raphael Samuel called attention to the workshop's Ruskin College origins as an expression not so much of Marxism, but of proletarian class consciousness. The journal's Marxism was "mainly implicit," Samuel admitted, agreeing further that the workshop's concern for local history, oral history, popular beliefs and customs, and folk and industrial songs was populist in mood. But why, he asked, should the far right have an exclusive claim to the "sense of cultural loss" to which the expansion of the industrial system had given rise? Samuel wished to avoid the esoteric theoretical discussions of the younger Marxists and called for a non-sectarian Marxism. He linked the orthodox Dobb's position to a Stalin-like economism from which the culturalists, taking heart from the humanist writings of the young Marx, had revolted.

Now, however, there is a major new effort to restore to intellectual and political history their proper roles in illuminating the past. Gertrude Himmelfarb is one of the most able historians of ideas of our generation. She has written books on Acton, Darwin, and Mill, and essays on many other eighteenth and nineteenth-century writers, thinkers, and political figures, and each of her studies has opened new ground. In the first of two projected volumes, *The Idea of Poverty*, Himmelfarb has joined intellectual to social history in what should prove an example for social historians—if they can manage to escape from the model that has recently come to dominate the field in both England and America.

Himmelfarb is a neoconservative in her politics. Unlike the Marxist social historians, she does not wish to provoke moral indignation nor incite social revolution. She accepts technological advances and a market economy as having made possible a relative plenitude for the laboring classes of the Western democracies. Himmelfarb has disappointed critics on the left who hoped to discover in this study by a prominent neoconservative a lack of proper sympathy with the Victorian poor, or even a denial of the existence of poverty. Without caricaturing its position or motives, she rejects the dismal philosophy of a laissez-faire and Malthusian political economy,

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which despite improving living standards demoralized many of the working classes and bestowed on even the respectable and independent poor the stigma of paupers. For her as for Disraeli, to whom she devotes a well-argued chapter, the issue was more than material poverty, it was one of "disposition as well as condition, of moral rights and duties, [and of] social obligations"—the making of "connections" between the rich and the poor so as to provide a sense of community. Guilt and fear no less than hardhearted neglect are the basis for separation and antagonism, not for connections. Moreover, like Egremont, the hero of Disraeli's novel *Sybil*—and like Adam Smith—she clearly believes that the condition of the poor can be bettered, in Egremont's words, "not by levelling the Few, but by elevating the Many."

Himmelfarb displays the complexities of the problems facing historians of the poor and of the working classes as well as the shortcomings and biases of the practitioners of the new model. She describes the chief phases of development of English poverty policy between 1750 and 1850: the unique system of parish relief for the poor initiated in the first decade of the seventeenth century; its transformation in the 1790s, the Speenhamland plan which sought to provide wage supplements, but resulted in the unforeseen consequences of support for idleness and illegitimacy; and the act of 1834 that attempted to rectify these defects, and in so doing aroused the sympathy and sense of guilt which transformed itself into the age of compassion in which the liberal West lives today.

Himmelfarb uncovers what contemporaries (who include Tom Paine and Edmund Burke, Carlyle, Cobbett, and the Chartists among others) actually meant by poverty, who the various classes of the poor really were, and what people of the time believed ought to be done to relieve them. In so doing, she demonstrates, to scholars and readers who are not doctrinally committed to the presuppositions of the new model history, its ambiguities and inadequacies, its shifting definitions, arbitrary selection of evidence, and far from impartial shaping of results.

Himmelfarb examines the rival visions of the political economists Adam Smith and T. R. Malthus which in the nineteenth century, as now, inform, and perhaps dominate, the debate on poverty. Smith saw the poor as an order of responsible persons, in exchange for whose labor a progressive economy would make possible both material and moral improvement. For Malthus, distrustful of the new industrial system, such progress was suspect: the produc-

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tion of food would always fall below the needs of a rapidly increasing population, and high wages would merely promote early marriages and large families, overstock the labor market, and bring on a struggle for existence leading to starvation.

Operating on Malthusian premises, the proponents of the new Poor Law of 1834 were determined to save the poor from the catastrophic fate awaiting dependent paupers. The denial of relief except to those confined to workhouses dehumanized the "respectable poor" and horrified contemporary social critics. Himmelfarb regrets the general acceptance by the liberal middle classes of Malthus's dismal prophecy rather than Smith's more sober and more accurate prescription, thus helping to undermine the moral and social legitimacy of the industrial system.

Malthus is Himmelfarb's particular *bête noir*, but not too far behind is Marx. Although Marx excoriated and ridiculed "Parson" Malthus, he accepted large parts of his apocalyptic vision. In Marx's view, the growing number and immiseration of the industrial proletariat would be the consequence not of a natural law of population powered by a sinful lust, but by the contradictions of a grinding capitalism.

With the actual improvement of the condition of the poor, it became possible to distinguish a marginal underclass which was to prove more titillating to a sensation-minded public than the respectable and industrious working poor. This was in part the contribution of the journalist Henry Mayhew, whom Himmelfarb sees as being perhaps the first to regard poverty as a cultural rather than an economic condition. Mayhew reinforced the Malthusian image of the poor living on the edge of civilized society. In a series of newspaper articles, *London Labour and the London Poor*, in the 1850s, he dealt not with the actual laboring classes so much as with what he himself called "street folk" and "those who will not work." These were costermongers (street buyers and sellers), buskers, prostitutes, thieves, swindlers, and beggars. Mayhew saw such people as belonging to a different race (many of them at this time were newly-arrived Irish), rovers with a resistance to any settled life or occupation, with their own argot, "lax ideas" of property and sexual morality, and a brutish vein of cruel pugnacity.

Himmelfarb notes that contemporaries of the middle and upper classes came to see this dwindling group of outcasts as typical of the working classes, and Mayhew's suggestion that society was somehow responsible for the degradation of the street folk struck the proper

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note for pious Victorians, all too ready to assume responsibility because of the material and moral contrast between their lives and those of the underclass.

The poor of Dickens's novels were more realistically depicted and therefore a far more respectable class than Mayhew's outcasts, but Dickens also tapped middle-class guilt and sentimentality. A view of a brutalized and brutal poor was drawn by Dickens's friend W. H. Ainsworth, whose descriptions of criminal life proved attractive to both working and middle-class readers. There was also the work of the Chartist G. W. M. Reynolds, whose series in the 1840s, *The Mysteries of London*, with its lurid stories of vice, violence, and depravity among the lower classes, constituted a genre directed at more prurient tastes. If the New Poor Law wished to prevent the laboring poor from becoming paupers, Himmelfarb notes, later reformers worried that many of those paupers might become criminals. Revulsion and fear were added to compassion, and all drew on the suspicion that the impulses toward idleness, brutality, and animal satisfaction were still active even in the respectable poor.

The better times of the 1850s and 1860s helped to lift the gloom of imminent pauperization from the respectable working class, and the 1880s would see the beginning of an attempt to redefine poverty so as to make legislative remedies more accessible. In the 1890s, the amateur sociologist and statistician Charles Booth would define the poor as including (in effect) all who might benefit by old age pensions and unemployment insurance, thus setting the stage for the reforms of the Liberal government of 1906 and the Labour welfare state of the 1940s. This effort to raise the level of the poor—now seen as those falling below a culturally-determined, and ever-rising, minimum standard of living—will be the subject of Himmelfarb's concluding volume. No longer "need," but "welfare" would become the rule and equality the goal. As Himmelfarb observes, the egalitarian standard of "relative deprivation" was to insure that the poor, as well as those wishing to improve their lot, will always be with us.

What strikes the non-Marxist is the effort of the new model social historians to remain loyal to the failed predictions of Marxist doctrine. Like the prophets of an unrealized apocalypse, they search both sacred text and circumstances for mitigating conditions, and remain confident that the expected event is merely delayed. If confronted with statistical evidence of improvement under industrial capitalism, they respond by citing qualitative deterioration or the increase of a disguised rate of exploitation. Those who maintain a

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Smithian position, for which there is considerable supporting evidence, are accused not only of shallow thinking but of moral insensitivity.

The Victorian confusion between the underclass and the working poor has persisted to the present day. The German writer Max Stirner celebrated the German "dangerous class" of *Lumpenproletariat* (literally, the "ragged proletariat") as the epitome of an asocial egoism and the bearer of a nihilistic revolution. Contemporaries sometimes called the English counterpart "the ragged classes." Present-day social historians of the left, determined to write "history from below," frequently identify the *Lumpen* underclass with the working class, among them Thompson, who has written of Mayhew's street-folk and thieves as "labouring people." This may make it easier to identify today's underclass similarly, and thus again to demonstrate the failure of the industrial and capitalist systems. Certainly these historians cater to the same emotional strains that offered Mayhew and Dickens so devoted an audience. Many of the writers may themselves be victims of a malady that has since the 1960s given us a ragged-proletariat nostalgically apotheosized by a faded-blue denim professoriat.

The Cambridge political historian G. R. Elton has described the socialist R. H. Tawney's *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*—the most admired of the radical histories published in the period between the wars—as "one of the most harmful books" of its time. Tawney insisted that history have a moral and social rather than a scientific purpose, declared Elton, and his book served to persuade an entire generation that the history of their country was a tale of "sinful selfishness and money-grubbing viciousness."

Thompson and the new social historians have inherited Tawney's mantle. They have constructed their work not only to fulfill his purposes but also to convince a new generation of readers that the history of the artisan and working classes was one of courageous if often mute resistance in the face of exploitation and physical and psychic repression. If Tawney (and the Hammonds) sought to arouse moral indignation, the new model history proposes—in the mood of the activist 1960s of its birth—to stir up antagonism, with uprooted artisans and primitive rebels serving as examples for students and intellectuals.

If the spirit of Himmelfarb's first volume is Smithian, can one anticipate that of the following will be somewhat Fabian? I suspect Himmelfarb would reject such a label. No one has exposed better

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than she the defects of the Benthamite solutions to social problems, and the Fabians, like the utilitarians (and in many respects their heirs), were arrogantly confident that they possessed "scientific" answers. The earlier Fabians saw themselves, in Sidney Webb's words, as performing the necessary thinking of a "small intellectual yet practical class." Do not the subjects and tone of the articles of the neoconservative quarterly *The Public Interest* (at least until its recent shift to a more ideological posture) call to mind the pragmatic problem solving of the pre-1914 Fabian Tracts?

In their early years, Sidney and Beatrice Webb (who were later to publish a multi-volumed work on the poor law) advanced a program that called for a national minimum, carefully defined in economic terms. This proposal was designed not to promote class antagonism, or even to advance the interests of a bureaucratic echelon with the mission of providing services to an expanding class of dependent poor, but to further the common good. It has been because the Fabians preferred the national interest over more narrow working-class interest, and perhaps because their objective definition of poverty would make the poor a declining resource, that Hobsbawm and other recent Marxist historians have attacked them.

In her scholarly and lucid treatment, Himmelfarb has made an essential contribution to the history of the period, and she has clarified the terms of present-day discussions of poverty. The general reader as well as historians and social scientists will look forward to her concluding volume.

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BOOKS

COLLECTIVE AMNESIA

PSYCHOTHERAPY IN THE THIRD REICH: THE GÖRING INSTITUTE. By Geoffrey Cocks. Oxford University Press. $24.95.

In September 1940, Matthias Heinrich Göring, Adlerian psychoanalyst and director of the German Institute for Psychogenic Research and Psychotherapy, wrote to Adolf Hitler:

> Deeply impressed by the stupendous events of this year, the German Medical Association for Psychotherapy is holding its third meeting under the theme "Psyche and Performance." We assure you, my Fuehrer, that we, too, will summon all our expertise to increase militancy and valiancy, by strengthening the will and pleasure of work.

Ten years later, the psychoanalyst Werner Schwidder, reporting on psychotherapy between 1933 and 1945, stated that the members of this institute had been engaged in "therapeutic and scientific work [and] had not been influenced by the political aims of those days."

Did Göring play a double game, and if he did, how could he do so while being financed by such agencies as the German Labor Front, the Luftwaffe, the Reichs Research Council, and by the SS-Lebensborn (charged with improving the German race)? Or, did Schwidder suffer from amnesia? And if so, why did no one step forth to challenge his story? In other words, what were the circumstances that led to this wholesale *stillschweigen,* to this collusion?

Geoffrey Cocks, in *Psychotherapy in the Third Reich*, supplies many of the answers, by describing how professionalism was bent to ideology. This focus allows him a certain amount of objectivity—which has led reviewers to remind us that survival between the cracks of an evil regime is bound to contaminate the survivors. Still, why did it take so long to publish this fascinating 1975 Ph.D. dissertation about the institutionalization of psychotherapy? And why did we not know for nearly forty years that the Nazis co-opted Freud's ideas after they ousted all the Jewish psychoanalysts and publicly burned their books? Who was being protected and from what?

Propaganda by the Nazis before the Second World War had cast Hitler as the historical personification of the nation and of every

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German. The subsequent ideological and military successes had led refugee intellectuals such as Hannah Arendt, Franz Neumann, and the other Frankfurt scholars to corroborate the notion of the unbeatable Nazi behemoth. Had the Germans won the war, the superiority derived from pure "Aryan" blood, it was believed, would have been imposed on the rest of the world. To some extent, these ideas were bound to guide the policies of the victors: American soldiers were warned not to fraternize because "every German is Hitler," and an elaborate network of organizations was being set up that would carry out programs of "denazification" and of general reeducation. Given their insuperable task, the American authorities quickly had to identify "trustworthy" Germans: already in July 1945, Dr. Zeise, a psychotherapist, informed his colleagues in Munich that he had been requested by the American authorities to submit a plan for the reeducation of the German people, and he asked them all to cooperate. (There is no transcript of the conversations in which he convinced the Americans of his own reliability.)

Inevitably, Zeise's colleagues were eager to participate. And the few former Freudians who had remained in Berlin also had initiated activities that would allow them to resume their work. To that end, they all got in touch with former Jewish friends who, for the most part, were now in London or New York. In their letters, the Germans now complained of their own victimization after the Jewish colleagues had "voluntarily" withdrawn and left the county between 1933 and 1938 and asserted how, at great peril, they secretly had continued to fan the flames of Freudianism. A good many of the refugee analysts, of course, did not want to have anything to do with those who had benefitted from their own misfortunes, and who had stood by while many of their relatives were sent to the gas chambers. But, enough of them responded, and professional contacts were resumed. Now, the recounting of various acts of courage, such as Alexander Mitscherlich's early arrest and later denunciation of the Nazi doctors, and his accusations of collective guilt in Nazi crimes, or the execution of John Rittmeister in 1943 (he and his wife had been involved in a Soviet espionage network), went a long way to show that not every German had been a Nazi.

The American authorities had been working with refugee psychoanalysts for some time. Because the latter had proven that psychoanalysis could get some people to change their behavior they had been asked to advise a number of American government agencies on conditions of wartime stress, on group dynamics, and on the reedu-

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cation of authoritarian personalities. This acceptance of psychoanalysis also engendered a climate that challenged these analysts to apply their new expertise "in the field." Consequently, American optimism and German opportunism converged, and furthered professional interests on both sides of the Atlantic. That the Berlin Reichsinstitut for Psychotherapy had been bombed to shambles in April 1945 was a blessing: all records disappeared, and as long as the surviving members told the same story, they could not be accused of collaboration.

As Cocks tells us, the psychotherapists had accommodated to the Nazi powers. Some, such as Carl G. Jung and Fritz Kuenkel, whose psychoanalysis had overtones derived from romanticism, and who already believed in the innate determinants of culture and religion, easily accepted the Nazis' racial ideology, which had similar roots; others, such as Göring and Leonhard Seif, were more intent on forging a *Volksgemeinschaft*; and yet others, in the (small) Freudian *Gruppe A*, were more inclined to use psychotherapy to help cure homosexuality and other "deviances." Yet, the situation was in flux, and especially when it began to look as if the Germans might not win the war, the psychoanalysts began to spend more time worrying about survival—during bombardment and in the event of an Allied victory.

The cooperation between Freudians, Adlerians, and Jungians provided the organizational model for the post-war psychoanalytic organizations. Initially, the German members of the General Medical Society for Psychotherapy had banded together, in 1933, to defend themselves against accusations of Jewishness. In fact, they began by relying on Jung's theoretical distinctions between the Aryan and the Jewish psyche, although they soon depended more on their director, Matthias Heinrich Göring—Hermann's cousin. It was he, and the magic of the Göring name, who facilitated the perpetuation of the "Jewish science," by absorbing the Karl Abraham Institut of Psychoanalysis in Berlin, in 1933, and its Viennese counterpart in 1938. Göring, the father figure known as Papi, ran interference between the interests of his therapists and those of the Nazi state. He allegedly helped analysts who had Jewish wives; his wife, Erna, was analyzed by Werner Kemper, one of the four Freudians. But, whereas Cocks seems to accept that Frau Göring changed from a "dangerous defender" of Nazi *Seelenheilkunde* to a friend (when she alerted her analyst to the impending arrest of individuals distrusted by the regime), a number of young investigators around the

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journal *Psyche* recently have maintained that she was more feared than trusted. Furthermore, both Görings must have cooperated with high-level Nazis, I would think, in order to obtain all that information on people suspected of subversion—even if they did alert a few of them to impending trouble. Had she been in the clear, I would add, there would have been no reason for Felix Boehm or Harold Schultz-Hencke, two leading postwar Freudians in Berlin, to state in 1948, that she ought not be admitted to the Deutsche Psychoanalytische Gesellschaft.

Cocks draws fascinating portraits of the psychotherapists who navigated a perilous course between the proliferating Nazi Party and state bureaucracies. And he demonstrates how they were able to advance their institutional and professional interests. Their claims for German *Seelenheilkunde* elicited trust from the Hitler Youth, the League of German Girls, the Reich Criminal Police Office, the SS, and from individual members of the Nazi hierarchy—some of whom counted on the therapists to save endangered relatives. But, this did not happen without a good dose of cooperation with Nazi policies aimed to "improve" the race. The therapists accepted the slogan "Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Fuehrer." And they bridged their Jungian and Adlerian differences, and consulted Freud's works, in order to fuse psychological wellbeing with Nazi values and attitudes, and to help mold the German *Uebermensch*.

If Cocks has been too soft on these German psychotherapists, this may well be because he was the first person to dig into the available historical documents and to inspire confidence in the surviving protagonists—and because so many of them have died. Indeed, he has performed an enormous service: long before this book was published, his original dissertation inspired a number of Germans to reexamine the history of psychotherapy during the Nazi period. It was he who turned a taboo subject into a hot topic. Walter Bräutigam, for example, who was analyzed at the Göring Institut between 1942 and 1943, recently recalled his experiences. He insisted, contradicting criticisms by Elizabeth Brainin and Isidor Kaminer, that the psychoanalysts never became tools of the rulers, but that, instead, they cooperated only by helping to "turn inept weaklings into capable individuals" for the sake of the state. Bräutigam recounted how he had been free to choose the Freudian Fritz Riemann as his analyst and, like Cocks, indicated how the war increasingly dominated the institute's activities. Thus he seems to concur, for the most part, with those who in the debates in *Psyche* are white-

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washing these psychoanalysts. Nevertheless, his reminiscences remind us, once more, how easy it is for well-meaning people preoccupied with their daily tasks to ignore the evil that surrounds them. Had Cocks not opened Pandora's box, Bräutigam probably would not have come forth.

By far the most startling discovery, however, was made recently by Johannes Grunert. When he looked into the archives of the Munich branch of the Reichsinstitut, he found documents illuminating the demise of the Göring Institut, which indicate that the German psychotherapists indeed suffered from collective amnesia. For, in February 1945, the Berlin members, in the wake of American and Soviet advances, had entrusted Dr. Felix Scherke to move their monies and records to Munich. Grunert discovered evidence, supporting Cocks, that the Branch Bayern, just like the other Reichsinstitutes (in Düsseldorf, Stuttgart, Wupperthal and Vienna), were instructed to cure neurotics and those difficult to educate, to train psychotherapists, to do research on productivity, and to provide seminars and lectures on mental health for doctors, educators, nursery school teachers, social workers and others. And he found correspondence referring to 100.000 Reichsmark that had been transferred from Berlin to Munich. Though presenting a more or less united front to the outside, the psychotherapists went so far as to hire lawyers, in 1946 (six months after the Americans had formally approved them), in order to decide to whom the money belonged. In fact, the Munich lawyer stated that there was "no doubt that this institute [in Munich] is the practical and formal continuation of the Reichsinstitut. The latter never ceased to exist."

As we know, there were almost no Freudians in the Munich group. So, the Berliners represented German psychoanalysts in 1949 at the first meeting of the International Psychoanalytic Association after the war. Therefore, the theoretical differences were between Harald Schultz-Hencke and Carl Mueller-Braunschweig. Ironically, the IPA admitted this group only provisionally, because the cooperation with other therapists had muddied their Freudian credentials. As Anna Freud then stated: "It is not easy to say how many of the thirty-seven members of the Deutsche Psychoanalytische Gesellschaft are psychoanalysts in the accepted sense." Subsequently, Mueller-Braunschweig managed to set up the Deutsche Psychoanalytische Verein (it was accepted in 1951), while Schultz-Hencke's Neo-Analyse continued to dominate the DPG. In retrospect, it is amazing that none of the insiders publicly discussed the Nazi period,

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that they buried their soiled linens for the "common good." Certainly, when the members of the former Reichsinstitut granted Cocks his interviews in 1973 and 1974, they must have pulled their punches, unless, in their minds, they already had rewritten their pasts and had exonerated themselves.

In any event, the young, and leftist, German analysts who have learned that they must use their own unconscious as tools in order to help get in touch with their patients' unconscious, now are questioning their entire discipline. They accuse their elders of fraud and deceit, and talk of their collective guilt. For, if their elders could hide the fact that in January 1945 the Reichsinstitut had 290 members (102 doctors, 188 laymen, and 215 candidates), what else have they been hiding? Cocks has gone far in disclosing their activities. He also discloses, in detail, the institutional basis of the now extremely successful discipline: it was built on Nazi foundations and on opportunism. Therefore, it is no wonder that their successors want to know the truth—a truth Alexander Mitscherlich tried to elicit in vain, and which would have besmirched many an impeccable reputation. This is what explains the forty years of collective amnesia.

EDITH KURZWEIL

PARABLES OF THE ARTIST

HIM WITH HIS FOOT IN HIS MOUTH AND OTHER STORIES. By Saul Bellow. Harper & Row. $15.95.

The title story of Saul Bellow's superb collection of stories is a portrait of the artist as an offensive man. Shawmut, the artist-type (a musicologist by profession) if not exactly an artist, characterizes himself fairly as an utterer of "bad witticisms that well up from the depths of his nature," as good a definition of much of the inspiration of contemporary fiction as one would wish. "A surrealist in spite of himself," a random shooter from the mouth, Shawmut blames himself more than others. ("'Oh, Dr. Shawmut, in that cap you look like an archeologist.' Before I can stop myself, I answer, 'And you look like something I just dug up.'") The story, told in the form of a letter to the victim of the witticism, is an act of expiation.

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Shawmut is wise enough to know that the witticism is vile. But the temptation remains irresistible. Even his friendships seem to be defined by the temptation. His gimpy friend Edward Walish (shades of Valentine Gersbach, the villian in *Herzog*) reflects his own darker nature: "a wise guy in an up-to-date post-modern existentialist sly manner."

The wisecracking artist is endemic to contemporary fiction. In *God Knows*, Joseph Heller, for example, discovers that God is not an earnest social democrat, but (imagine the chutzpah!) the original comic Jewish novelist. The novel is a tissue of dumb wisecracks (King David on his marriage to Michal: "Michal, my bride, was not just the daughter of a king but a bona-fide Jewish American Princess . . . I am the first in the Old Testament [sic] to be stuck with one" and on the comparative merits of the Moses story and his own story: "Moses has the Ten Commandments, it's true, but I've got much better lines."). Such inspired words should have been blocked and absorbed back in the system, as Shawmut suggests about his own bad witticisms.

The so-called avant-garde (bad witticisms, deliberately deviant imagination and all), paradoxically American mainstream, needs to be resisted. Thus Shawmut who writes with fraternal affection for Allen Ginsberg (he has included the queer nation in the Whitmanian universal embrace) nevertheless doubts that "the path of truth must pass through all the zones of masturbation and buggery." Shawmut at least knows that "right speech" is based on self-control. The maxims of La Rochefoucald are not wisecracks, nor is Bellow's resonantly aphoristic prose, which rather serves as an antidote to the compulsive wisecrack. Shawmut's story is a confession of sin, an attempt at purgation, so that he can hear words of ultimate seriousness.

> The world's grandeur is fading. And this is our human setting, devoid of God, she says with great earnestness. But in this deserted beauty man himself still lives as a God-pervaded being. It will be up to him—to us—to bring back the light that has gone from these molded likenesses, if we are not prevented by the forces of darkness. Intellect, worshipped by all, brings us as far as natural science, and this science, although very great, is incomplete. Redemption from *mere* nature is the work of feeling and of the awakened eye of the Spirit. The body, she says, is subject to the forces of gravity. But the soul is ruled by levity, pure.
>
> I listen to this and have no mischievous impulses.

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It is hard for modern ears to refrain from smiling at words of ultimate seriousness, however eloquent—hard not to feel their futility. The saving grace in these words of seriousness is a holy "levity" to be distinguished from wisecracking. Still, it is not easy to get back the great nineteenth-century sentiment: the reverence for life. The language of art, as Bellow knows as well as anyone, may be aggressive and hard: how to keep it from mean-spiritedness?

Bellow's solution is to invent harsh, large-souled characters—like Wulpy, in "What Kind of Day Did You Have?". Harold Rosenberg-like in his giant physical size and intellectual sensibility, Wulpy is a prince of men, a world-class artist-intellectual who assumes "a kind of presidential immunity from all inconveniences." We see Wulpy's life through the eyes of Katerina, his lover (an admirable addition to Bellow's gallery of voluptuous, generous and suffering matronly women). Wulpy, with his gimpy leg and poor health, is as difficult and demanding a lover as he is an imperious intellect. Bellow shows Wulpy contending with the unpleasant realities of the lecture tour: air travel in inclement weather, missed connections, importuning characters who want to meet the great man, and loneliness in a hotel room. But the power of this story is in Bellow's aphoristic creation of Wulpy's character.

> At the age of seventy, he had arranged his ideas in well-nigh final order: none of the weakness, none of the drift that made supposedly educated people contemptible. How can you call yourself a modern thinker if you lack the realism to identify a weak marriage quickly, if you don't know what hypocrisy is, if you haven't come to terms with lying—if, in certain connections, people can still say about you, "He's a sweetheart!"? Nobody would dream of calling Victor "a sweetheart!"
>
> [Katerina] was with him in his lighthearted, quick-moving detachment from everything that people (almost all of them) were attached to. In a public-opinion country, he made his own opinions. Katerina was enrolled as his only pupil. She paid her tuition with joy.

Wulpy's adversary is the seductive filmmaker Wrangel, an intellectual entertainer and promoter of bad faith, who justifies his trivializing of ideas (he pretends to be a great admirer of Wulpy) by claiming that caricature clarifies abstract ideas. Another threat to Wulpy comes from Police Lieutenant Krieggstein, candidate for a Ph.D in criminology and rival for Katerina's affections. Krieggstein is in the

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Bellovian line of reality instructors, who try to give people like Victor Wulpy "a better idea . . . of how savage it is out there." But, as Wulpy remarks, Krieggstein's own reality "belongs to the Golden Age of American Platitudes." He is beneath contempt for Wulpy: that is, beneath the ken of art, the only thing that counts. Wrangel puts it right: "Victor knows what the real questions are, and . . . that without art we can't judge what life is."

There is the risk of preciousness, but Bellow avoids it by reconceiving the bourgeois-bohemian conflict as a story of symbiosis, whatever the mutual suspicion. The "bourgeois" (the man of reality) in Bellow's fiction (whether he is a business *gonif* or a bona fide racketeer) is a kind of raw energy or material for the imagination. Bellow's artists or artist-types have nothing of the effete about them. Ijah, the artist-type in *Cousins*, mistrusts romantic inwardness, which has been the diminishing capital of so much art of the past two centuries, because he knows from his life in Chicago "that there were so many things going on in the *outer* world, the city itself was so rich in opportunities for *real* development, a center of such wealth, power, drama, rich even in crimes and vices, in diseases and intrinsic—not accidental—monstrosities, that it was foolish, querulous, to concentrate on oneself." But he refuses to concede this outer world to his racketeer cousin Tanky, for he too has experienced evil and "the dissolution of the old bonds of existence." If there is a resentment toward the *outer world* and those who incarnate it, it is because they want to deny it to the artist. In "Zetland: By a Character Witness," the father of Zetland, a success in business and an admirer of the arts, insists on a division of labor in which his genius son would be "all marrow no bone." If we cannot know life without art, an art that is cut off from the outer world is lifeless. Zetland's son fights to claim the world for himself.

But what does it mean in 1985 to judge life, from the vantage point of art or of anything else? Bellow's vision has become increasingly apocalyptic, as readers of his last novel *The Dean's December* have remarked with some displeasure. Ijah strikes the apocalyptic note: "And whether we are preparing a new birth of spirit or the agonies of final dissolution . . . depends on what you think, feel, and will about such manifestations or apparitions, on the kabbalistic skill you develop in the interpretation of these contemporary formulations." The aphoristic style is open-ended. Don't expect any final truth here.

Then what does the wisdom of art amount to? The implicit

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answer of these stories is the integrity of language: the truth, wit and eloquence with which it represents the world. The wisecrack and the cliché are degraded versions of the aphorism, the aspiration to express reality with "ultimate seriousness." We need only consider the trivializing power of the media through which we acquire so much of our political and moral "knowledge" of the world to appreciate the significance of Bellow's imaginative enterprise.

Bellow's work recalls Flaubert in his moral sensitivity to cliché. But unlike Flaubert, he does not confuse cliché with reality. (Writers like Donald Barthelme, who have the Flaubertian gift, have become complicit parodists of the cliché. Art is a matter of reduction: there is no higher and lower, no inner and outer. The pre-Columbian truth of the world is that it is flat.) For Bellow, art is not a bastion of purity to be preserved from the contaminations of the world. He has a healthy American or Chicagoan respect for the crude, even criminal vitalities in the world. Resistance comes, however, not only from criminal vitality, but from a higher self, which, as Shawmut remarks, "few people are equipped to observe." Bellow's quest for a higher spirituality, an ultimate seriousness, need not disquiet profane readers, for it has not extinguished his profane delight in the world. In these stories, spirituality is an element in a vision of complexity and balance that resists the reductions of experience to absurdity and despair.

EUGENE GOODHEART

THE FINE ART OF REMEMBRANCE

THE COLLECTED PROSE. By Elizabeth Bishop.
Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $17.50.

Since *The Collected Prose* has been widely reviewed, its relation to Bishop's poetry evaluated, it seems most useful to examine the salient themes and dominant traditions of these appealing, if flawed, stories and memoirs.

Memory is so much the matter of Elizabeth Bishop's art that she almost takes her place as the Proust of the Americas (North and South), reincarnate in a familiar, clipped, modest idiom. The magic

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lantern of her imagination dissolves the stabilities of the present and casts up old correspondences. The past implants itself in images which, encountered by chance, send the beholder into reverie. Sweetly or relentlessly, childhood's tender joys and longings, its insights, its bewilderments, play themselves back. But Bishop's memory, for all its affinities to Proust's, does not provide an aesthetic happiness to counter the pain of deprivation. Nor is the afterimage a corrective to the distortions of adult life, as it is in Wordsworth, her more direct precursor. Rather, memory involuntarily exposes the beholder to the intrusions of the past—sometimes delightful, sometimes traumatizing, always disruptive and disorienting. Unfinished business and uncomprehended dramas force their way into consciousness. Beneath the surface charm of Bishop's antique dolls and horse-drawn wagons lies the turmoil of Dickinson, of Poe, of Baudelaire.

The Collected Prose opens with a passage designed to conduct the reader to the writer's memory of her primer class in rural Nova Scotia, but serves also, like Proust's overture, to characterize the faculty of memory that controls so many of the pages which follow:

> Every time I see long columns of numbers, handwritten in a certain way, a strange sensation or shudder, partly aesthetic, partly painful, goes through my diaphragm. It is like seeing the dorsal fin of a large fish suddenly cut through the surface of the water—not a frightening fish like a shark, more like a sailfish. The numbers have to be only up to but under a hundred, rather large and clumsily written, and the columns squeezed together, with long vertical lines between them, drawn by hand, long and crooked. They are usually in pencil, these numbers that affect me so, but I've seen them in blue crayon or blurred ink, and they produce the same effect. . . .
>
> The real name of this sensation is memory. It is a memory I do not even have to try to remember, or reconstruct; it is always right there, clear and complete. The mysterious numbers, the columns, that impressed me so much—a mystery I never solved when I went to Primer Class in Nova Scotia!

The shudder in the diaphragm is not simply the result of math anxiety, of course. The story which follows tells of a child's feelings about a world she cannot control—a world of older children who make one late for school, alphabets too long to remember, but also of poverty and even madness. The unmentioned but probably operative

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fact about this year she remembers is that her mother suffered a nervous breakdown. Such stories dither in the details, as though objects absorb a knowledge of the scenes they inhabit. Indeed the shudder in the diaphragm may be a response to this eerie phenomenon of retention rather than to any set of events from the past. "Partly aesthetic, partly painful," the memories alive in objects have an almost sublime power over the beholder. The "clang, clang" of the blacksmith's hammer in "In the Village" echoes long after the silence of those whose story it is. The "small, pained-looking rosebuds, like pursed mouths" on the wallpaper in "Memories of Uncle Neddy" will continue to horde the secret anguish never uttered in life.

Not all the memories here are painful or ambivalent, of course. Bishop paints many fond portraits, of Marianne Moore, of Georgio Valdes, of Helena Morley, in which her affection sharpens rather than dulls her sense of their quirky vitality. Again her synecdochic method displays humanity in its by-products: housing, entertainments, food. Even the most troubling memories have aged to the flavor of irony and wit. Describing her misery at being transplanted from beloved Nova Scotia to dreaded Boston, Bishop writes in "The Country Mouse" of the hated doll "Drusilla" which her Boston grandmother thought more appropriate for travel than her native Raggedy-Ann. The two dolls charmingly characterize the alternative selves the child confronts in her migration.

While the experience of memory itself may be involuntary in Bishop, the writing that stems from it is highly motivated: by gratitude, by revenge, or by the more general wish to map and preserve one's past, one's identity. For against the fear of memory's lurking presence is an equal and opposite fear of forgetfulness, of the moss which covers up the names, the mildew that damages the old portraits in "Memories of Uncle Neddy." Bishop sets her descriptive art against these infections, making the pewter shine, the old faces blush.

In her attention to the particular, in the sympathetic irony of her portraits, in her narrative reticence, Bishop's prose most recalls Chekhov, though it lacks his mastery of structure. But she tried her hand at romance as well as realism. In the stories that combine these modes—"The Baptism," "The Farmer's Children"—we feel her kinship with Flannery O'Connor (with whom she corresponded). But there are no saving revelations in Bishop. Her prose, like her poetry, counters apocalyptic meaning.

Hawthorne and Kafka perhaps instructed the parables—"In

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Prison," "The Sea and Its Shore." Regrettably, Bishop did not pursue these "horrible fable ideas." But perhaps their success owes less to their genre than to their autobiographical themes: the inheritance of an over-inscribed world, the isolation of self and the substitution of writing for society, writing's part in the strange collusion between freedom and necessity. The autobiographical protagonist of "The Sea and Its Shore" is deeply at odds with himself, employed "to keep the sand free from papers" (joining the priesthood of the silent sea), but also occupied with reading and interpreting those papers. While place is reduced to the bare boundary between life and death (his house resembles a grave), it is "littered with old correspondences" which hold out the promise of some apotheosis. The yellowing papers on their way to obliteration look like sand, yet the sand looks like print, the sandpiper's tracks like punctuation marks. Bishop leaves her persona caught between incomplete and excessive meaning, between interpretation and silence. "In Prison" deals with a similar uncomfortable state of between-ness, but her protagonist dreams of ending the ambiguity between inner and outer worlds by choosing imprisonment. In his purified condition, he thinks, meaning can be invented, interpretation freed from reality. But his mind continually wanders from its purpose toward the impurities of the world.

Both protagonists are literary men trying to situate themselves in a dizzying landscape of texts. Their undertakings are doubtful at best and suggest Bishop's unease about the profession of writing. Such ambivalence about writing gets subtly purged in "The USA School of Writing," a memoir of the shabby correspondence school where Bishop was first employed. The school exposed a side of literature which artists repress: literature as means to fame, as source of revenue, as a platform for ideologies, as a cure for loneliness. More profoundly, Bishop may be questioning the meaning of authorial identity itself. Is literature as "correspondence" with the world, with readers, inherently false? As an "author" in the school she takes on the fake identity of Mr. Margolies (she is one in a line) through whom she is able to be "kind" to her students. Not often ready to spell out the implications of her work, Bishop's central passage in this memoir leaves the power of writing mysterious:

> It was here, in this noisome place, in spite of all I had read and been taught and thought I knew about it before, that the mysterious, awful power of writing first dawned on me. Or, since

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> "writing" means so many different things, the power of the printed word, or even that capitalized Word whose significance had previously escaped me but then made itself suddenly, if *sporadically*, plain.

Bishop returns promptly to anecdote, but we gather, first, that this power is not altogether benevolent, that it can be the agent of deception, of false hope, of idolatry. Bishop had to symbolically rid herself of Mr. Margolies, to quit this job, in order to purify writing and go on. The consequence was an art which offers no platforms, no fanfare, no quick fixes or easy intimacies, but an unforgettable record of a world seen feelingly.

BONNIE COSTELLO

THE NEW SCIENCE AND THE NEW POLITICS

VICO AND MARX: AFFINITIES AND CONTRASTS. By Giorgio Tagliacozzo. Humanities Press. $34.95.

Was Marx directly influenced by Vico and, if so, how much? The question is a matter of scholarly debate, but it also raises issues of much broader interest than many of those which ordinarily preoccupy Marxologists. In the whole of Marx's writings and correspondence, there are in fact only three references to Vico—in a footnote to *Capital* Vol. I, in a letter to Engels, and in a letter to Lassalle. The short answer to the scholarly aspect of the question is probably: no, Marx wasn't at all strongly influenced by Vico, whom he may never have read in any depth. But in the relevant passage in *Capital* Marx does fasten upon one of the main themes of Vico's work which seems to connect it to Marx's own conception of history. Vico says, as Marx points out in his rendition of the famous phrase in *New Science*, that "human history is distinguished from natural history by the fact that we have made the former but not the latter." Marx saw himself as initiating a "new science"—historical materialism—no less than Vico had done; and it seems as though each built his view upon the same principle.

It is because this is often taken for granted by secondary interpreters of Marx that Marx is often portrayed as standing in im-

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mediate line of descent from Vico. The idea is nevertheless a specious one and does not stand up to the scrutiny of those who know Vico's work well. Several of the best articles in this collection are devoted to demonstrating the fundamental discrepancies between Vico's writings and those of Marx. Thus David Lachterman points out that Marx situates his tribute to Vico in the middle of a discussion of the influence of the forces of production in shaping social change. Marx's conception of history is shaped by an ontology of human labor based on the production and reproduction of the material means of existence. But Vico does not regard the dynamic properties of human history as lying in the subordination of nature; rather, human beings make their own history by creating a social world of custom and ritual which serves to tame their originally animal nature. Leon Pompa argues that Vico takes the content of "ideologies" much more seriously than Marx does, tracing Marx's failures in this respect again to the tenets of the materialist conception of history. Finally, in a well-documented discussion, Ball shows that the history which Marx's human beings "make" is quite different from that which is "made" in the Vichean version of social development. In fact, he claims, Marx misunderstood what Vico had in mind when speaking of the 'making' of the social world. Marx naturally interpreted the term to mean fabrication, production. But Vico sought to defend the very distinction between *techne* and *praxis* which Marx collapsed into a single dimension of human activity. Human beings 'make' a life for themselves precisely insofar as they manage to separate themselves from nature, in the *praxis* of the creation of an intersubjectively meaningful social life, rooted in myth and in language.

If it be granted that the similarities between Vico and Marx are not all that close, it makes more, rather than less, sense to compare their views. For if Vico is no longer perched in the convenient niche, "forerunner of Marx," it might be possible to rehabilitate him as a writer whose ideas need to be taken as seriously as those of Marx in regard to their potential relevance to the social sciences in the current era. After all, Marx's historical materialism does today seem less than adequate as a guide to explicating patterns of social change; Marx certainly did not give enough attention to the interpretation of language as a necessary and basic concern of social analysis; and the "Promethean" teleology which Marx sought to uncover in human history looks remote indeed from the fractured and troubled world of the twentieth century. In several of the other contributions to this book, it is indeed suggested that Vico has more to teach us, at least

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in some respects, than has Marx. Two of the more perceptive of such contributions are those by Donald Verene and Edmund Jacobitti, the former addressing the nature of poetry and art in Vico and Marx, the latter connecting Vico to aspects of Gramsci's thought in which Gramsci departs substantially from Marx. According to Verene, Vico's writings provide us with a vantage point from which to essay a critique of the domination of modern society by technological imperatives. Those of Marx, on the other hand, are too deeply implicated in the rise of modern technology to be able to criticize it effectively. Jacobitti connects Vico's stress upon the importance of "common sense"—moral values and practices uniting a community of citizens—to Gramsci's conception of "cultural hegemony." Gramsci drew upon the work of Vicenso Guoco, who was a professed follower of Vico. On this basis, Gramsci was stimulated to introduce what were essentially quite novel ideas within Marxism, ideas that have proved to be very fruitful.

Unfortunately, neither Verene nor Jacobitti, nor any of the other authors in the book, develop such insights in depth. Vico's thought may have a specific relevance to modern society, which can be brought out through a comparison with Marx. But the case needs to be made in a more forceful and innovative way than is achieved by any of the contributors to this volume. The book would have profited from a much more comprehensive overall introduction and from more extensive editorial work. The articles are stylistically quite repetitive. The section of *Capital* in which Marx refers to Vico is repeated in most of them. On first acquaintance, it is interesting and thought-provoking. But by the time the reader has come across it a dozen times, it does tend to pall a little.

ANTHONY GIDDENS

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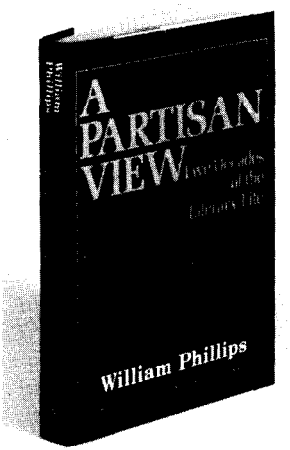

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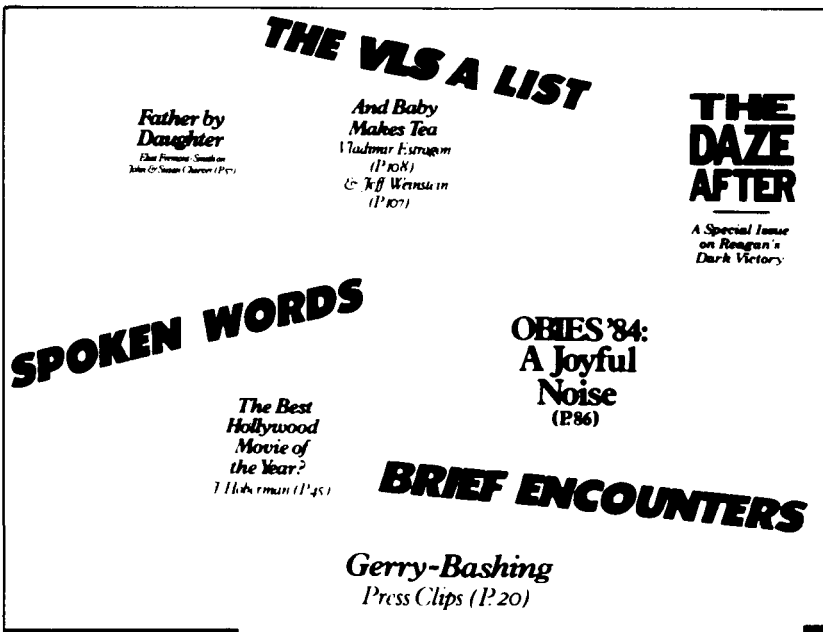

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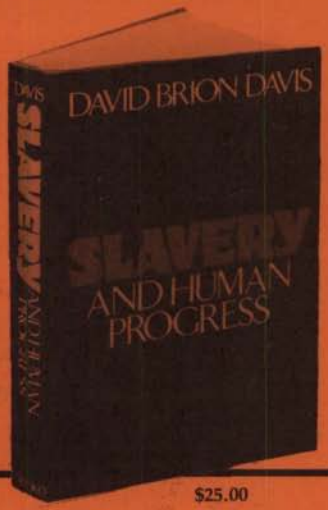

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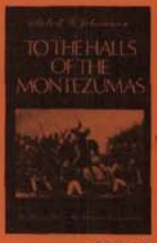

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